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ORTHODOXY AND CHAR- ITY UNITED.

IN WHICH ARE CONSIDERED AND DISPLAYED THE
CAUSES AND MISCHIEVOUS EFFECTS OF
UNCHARITABLENESS,
AND ALSO THE NATURE AND OBLIGATIONS OF
CHARITY,
ESPECIALLY WITH RESPECT TO PERSONS OF DIFFER-
ENT OPINIONS AND PRACTICES IN MATTERS
OF RELIGION.

Chiefly selected from the Works of
ISAAC WATTS. D. D.

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PREFACE.

THE promotion of charity being at the present moment of the utmost importance, the following observations on this subject are extracted from a very scarce and valuable work of the learned and pious Dr. Isaac Watts, denominated “ *Orthodoxy and Charity united ; in several reconciling Essays on the Law and Gospel, Faith and Works.*”

Although the aforesaid essays were collected and published by the Dr. in one volume 8vo, and have a general reference to the same object, they were originally composed and printed at different times, and are still distinguished by different titles.

The first essay is entitled “ the substance or matter of the gospel.”

The second, is entitled “ the form of the gospel—an inquiry whether it be a new law with commands, threatenings and conditions in it ? and whether the duties of the gospel are our justifying righteousness ?” —“ a reconciling discourse.”

The third, is entitled “ the true use of the moral Law under the Gospel, illustrated in the conference of

Christ with a young Pharisee, and explained in a sermon preached May 1711. from Math. xix. 17. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."*

The fourth, is entitled, "mistaken ways of coming to God without Christ—John xiv. 6. *no man cometh to the Father, but by me."*

The fifth, is "a plain and easy account of a sinner's coming to God by Jesus Christ, or of saving faith in Christ Jesus."

The sixth, is "a view of the manifold salvation of man by Jesus Christ, represented in order to reconcile christians of different sentiments."

The seventh, is "against uncharitableness, wherein the secret springs of this vice are traced, and the mischievous effects of it briefly surveyed: intended to expose that most unchristian iniquity of *censures, revilings, and church-anathemas*, on the account of smaller disputables in christianity."

This essay, which the author, in his preface tells us "was written to exemplify the title of his book, and was published many years before the others," is selected for republication on this occasion, together with the *eighth and ninth essays*, that conclude the volume, and were evidently designed to promote the same conciliatory and charitable purpose.

To these we have added a solemn address of Dr. Watts to the ever blessed God, for direction and assistance when contemplating and writing upon the doctrine of the Trinity. We have also added a few observations taken from the lives of Dr. Watts and Dr. Doddridge, showing how candid and charitable they were toward those persons who entertained different opinions in matters of religion.

It has been no part of our design to approve or disapprove of Dr. Watts' sentiments respecting the doctrine of the Trinity, or even to state what his sentiments were, but merely to show with what seriousness, and impartiality, and humility, and devotion, and laborious indefatigable assiduity, he endeavoured to investigate and understand this difficult subject ; and also his candour and charity towards those who did not adopt his sentiments.

As the Doctor advanced in life, and matured in knowledge and judgment, he altered his sentiments in some respects, and extended his charity, but this is not strange, when we consider that his mind was naturally large and liberal, always inquisitive and susceptible of rational conviction and improvement.

We have further added a *sermon on Charity*, preached before an Association of ministers in Connecticut, by the Rev. Nathaniel Hooker, formerly pastor of a

church in Hartford, in said state.—And also a few observations on the protestant religion, from a work of Mr. Chillingworth, entitled, “ *the religion of Protestants a safe way to Heaven.*”

The religious opinions and arguments of men, so justly celebrated for the greatness of their abilities and learning, the correctness of their reasoning, the benevolence and uprightness of their intentions, certainly merit our unprejudiced and attentive consideration.

ESSAY I.

AGAINST UNCHARITABLENESS, WHEREIN THE SECRET SPRINGS OF THAT VICE ARE TRACED, AND THE MISCHIEVOUS EFFECTS OF IT BRIEFLY SURVEYED. WRITTEN TO EXPOSE THAT MOST UNCHRISTIAN INQUIETY OF CENSURES, REVILINGS, AND CHURCH-ANATHEMAS ON THE ACCOUNT OF SMALLER DISPUTABLES IN CHRISTIANITY.

ROM. xiv. 3. *Let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth ; for God hath received him.*

LUKE ix. 54, 55. *His disciples said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them ? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.*

———Tantaene animis caelestibus irae ?
Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum ?

INTRODUCTION.

CHARITY in the soul of man is the very picture of the Godhead, taken as it stands in the fairest light. Wisdom and holiness, power, sovereignty, and justice are various features of the Deity : They are indeed his very nature and essence ; yet the scripture rather chooses to express, that *God is Love*, and that twice in one chapter, 1 *John* iv. 8, and 16. The beloved disciple that leaned on

the bosom of *Jesus*, took peculiar delight in the contemplation of God, under this character. This appears in his gospel as well as in his epistle. The other glories of that infinite beauty shine with awful beams, and command my reverence : But, methinks, I love to look upon so glorious a Being in his most condescending air, and to converse with him in his mildest and most inviting aspect.

Charity in man is a grace of that alluring sweetness, that my pen would fain be attempting to say something in favour of it : I find a strange pleasure in discoursing of this virtue, hoping that my very soul may be moulded into its divine likeness. I would always feel it inwardly warming my heart. I would have it look through my eyes continually, and it should be ever ready upon my lips to soften every expression of my tongue. I would dress myself in it as my best raiment. I would put it on upon my faith and hope, not so as entirely to hide them, but as an upper and more visible vesture, constantly to appear in among men. For our *Christian Charity* is to evidence our other virtues.

Uncharitableness is a loathsome part of the image of the fallen angel : It is a-kin to the hatred of God. *For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ?* 1 John iv. 20.

He that hates his fellow-christian, and brings railing accusations against him for a difference in little opinions, how can he expect to be beloved of God, who beholds in the best of us so many monstrous follies, and guilt of a more aggravated nature? By the word *uncharitableness* here, I would not include our neglect of charity to the poor and hungry, nor our aversion to errors of the grosser kind, but I mean our aversion to such persons who not only profess to be *Christians*, but who also agree with us in the chief doctrines of *Christianity*, (*viz.*) the pardon of our sins by the atoning sacrifice of *Christ*, and the sanctification of men by the powerful operations of the *Holy Spirit*, and the necessity of faith in *Christ*, and good works, &c. I mean our aversion to those who differ from us in little punctilios of doctrine or duty which are not expressly and plainly written in the New Testament; those who maintain such an aversion to their fellow Christians, as to pronounce damnation upon them, or some terrible and unchristian censures, because they do not come up to our sentiments and practices in things which are of little moment, while we agree in all fundamental points, and such as are of most importance.

This *uncharitableness* is a vice attended with such a train of mischiefs, that I would

set all my biggest powers in array to fight against it. It is a fountain of such bitter waters, that I would fain dam up the spring. It is a plant of so poisonous a product, that I would dig deep and search for the roots, and tear up all the fibres of it, though they twined about my heart-strings.

SECT. I.

The Causes of Uncharitableness.

An uncharitable humour springs generally from some of these following causes.

I. *First, From a malicious constitution of nature, an acrimonious or a cholerick temper of blood.* There are some animal engines of human flesh, that have their juices all soured in their very formation ; and there is an ill ferment raised in such persons at the perception of every object, that is not just suited to their present fancy and inclination : and by the hard laws of union between soul and body in this our fallen state, the spirit too often complies with the fretful distempers of the flesh. There are but few that attempt to suppress the ferment, and to resist the angry motions of the animal ; and of those few that attempt it, scarce one in ten is very successful : for it is a work of toil and difficulty, perpetual watchfulness and unceasing prayer.

This ill humour mixes itself with religion, as well as with civil affairs. - It diffuses its malignity through all the studies and the manners of the man, and gives a visible tincture to his notions and his practices. *Furio* can never converse about the calmest and most speculative points of divinity ; but his indignation kindles against every different opinion, his fiery temper breaks out and blazes, and he bestows on his own deportment the honourable names of shining light and burning zeal. His peevish and angry passions are so blended with his understanding, that hard names are his best arguments ; most convincing to himself, though they are the just scorn of the wise. He stabs his brethren that differ from him to the heart, with pointed railing ; and, from an aversion to an opinion, rises to an immortal hatred of the person. If our great Creator has united any of our souls to bodies that are less infected with this vicious juice, we have reason to adore his sovereign goodness.

II. *Self-love and pride, and a vain conceit of our own opinions*, is another spring of uncharitable carriages. Did you ever see a weak and humble soul sensible of its own poverty and ignorance, and ready to esteem others above himself, easily indulge this uncharitable humour ? Alas ! poor foolish mankind is very prone to esteem itself wise and knowing. Little *Laudillus*, who is al-

most always in the wrong, has much ado to persuade himself, that he was ever capable of mistaking. He secretly thinks all his opinions to be divine truths, and therefore he is very lavish in pronouncing error and heresy upon every notion and practice that differs from his own. He takes the freedom to choose a religion for himself, but he allows no man besides the same liberty. He is sure that he has reason to dissent from others, but no man has reason to dissent from him. He sets up for infallibility without a triple crown, and fixes a see of ecclesiastical sovereignty on this side the water. He awes some slavish spirits into submission, and they become treacherous to their own souls and to the rights of human nature, by delivering up their faith and consciences to his imperious dictates : then the man grows haughty, surly, and severe, especially if he be advanced to any degree of honour and authority in the church : then in his inflexible justice he delivers up the humble and inquisitive christian unto *Satan*, because he cannot *assent and consent to all and every thing contained* in his scheme ; and he teaches perhaps his elder brethren the doctrines and discipline of the gospel, as *Gideon* did the elders of *Succoth*, with the briars and thorns of the wilderness.

III. This hateful vice may be derived from a third original ; and that is a *constant and*

*friendly acquaintance with the men and books of our own opinion, and an avoidance of all the writers and persons that differ from us : this has a mighty influence to beget and maintain uncharitable notions ; yet this is the constant practice, not only of the unlearned, but of too many of the learned world. Hermes sits all the year in his own cell, and never looks abroad beyond the clan of his own fraternity : Hermes reads the controversies as they are described only by one party, and disputes them over only in the books that are written on one side. He finds a great appearance of argument and scripture there, and then proclaims it impossible that the adverse party should shew equal reason or revelation : And thus he proceeds to censure them as men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith, and twisting the scriptures to their own damnation. Cicero in his treatise *De natura Deorum*, marks this humour, and brands it, *vestra solum legitis, vestra anatis, cæteros causa incognita condemnatis*.**

But let you and I, my friend, who delight in charity, let us converse a little with authors that differ from our present opinions, and we shall see their sentiments drest up so plausi-

* You read only your own books, you love only your own, and you condemn others before you know any sufficient reason, for want of knowing their opinions.

bly, and set in so fair a light, that might easily persuade men of sincere consciences to embrace them ; and this will prevent us from censorious thoughts concerning our candid adversaries, and their disciples. There is scarce any thing that enlarges the mind more, and more disengages it from narrow and selfish principles, than a free converse with the virtuous and ingenious of all parties.

There is a memorable story to this purpose, concerning two neighbours in an unsociable town, who were always quarrelling about the private meeting and the parish church. Both places of worship in that town were well supplied with preachers of good sense and serious religion ; but each of them was the subject of unmerciful reproach between these two neighbours, whensoever they met, and their different methods of worship were mutually reviled ; the one as formal and spiritless, the other as enthusiastical and indecent. At last *Pacifico*, their common friend, persuaded them to hear each other's minister, and accompanied them both one day to their different assemblies ; and they were both surprized to hear the gospel preached with a due degree of decency and fervour, both at meeting and at church : and though they continued still to adhere to their own party, as judging it, in some respects, suited best to their edification ; yet they maintained hearty

friendship with each other, and delightful society in religious conference : Thus the quarrelsome mistake was rectified by better acquaintance. They lived many years together in peace ; they composed the animosities of different parties, that dwelt in the town ; they died in perfect charity, and left a sweet influence behind them, and an honourable example.

IV. A *fourth* spring of uncharitableness is, *our reading the word of God with a whole set of notions established before hand* : And yet how common a method, and how constant is this ? *Diæcion* has long ago determined, that bishops must be superior to presbyters ; he has received ordination from episcopal hands ; and hopes one day himself to be capable of ordaining others. Thus while he is growing up towards the mitre, he reads the scriptures only to confirm his own determined opinions. He stretches and torments many an unwilling text, to make it speak the language of his own thoughts. He neglects the passages that favour all other forms of government and methods of ministration ; or else he constrains them to mean episcopacy too : every word that he reads, hath a *diocesan* aspect ; and the first verse of *Genesis* can prove prelacy (for ought I know) as it has been able heretofore to demonstrate *Papacy*, when *in principio cre-*

avit deus cœlum & terram, decided the controversy, and set the *pope* above the *emperor* : for God made all things from one beginning, and not from two.

Synodias reads the bible with a Presbyterian glass, and *Fratrio* with a Congregational optick : they can find nothing there but their own opinions, and both of them wonder that *Diacion* should not see them too. *Fratrio* turns over the scriptures with great diligence and meditation, and as often as he finds the word *church* there, he thinks of nothing but a congregation of faithful men ; as the church of *Jerusalem*, *Alexandria*, and *Antioch* are so many single congregations. When *Synodias* meets the same word in his bible, he is often in the midst of an assembly of divines ; and especially when any power is attributed to the church, he is sure it must intend a classis of presbyters, or consistory of elders. When the same word falls under the eye of *Diacion* in his course of reading the new testament, he cannot imagine any thing is meant short of a diocese : all his churches are or should be as big as counties or shires. And I might add, that when poor *Parochianus*, the mason, finds leisure to read a chapter, and lights upon the mention of a church in it, he thinks immediately of a tall stone-building with a steeple upon it, a bell or two, and a weather-cock.

I might give the like instances of many other terms and expressions in scripture, to which men have unalterably fixed their several different ideas, and raised consequences from them, and interpret the word of God by them, without inquiring whether their ideas are conformable to the sense in which the scripture uses those expressions : and then it is no wonder that their schemes of ecclesiastical government are so different : and yet each of these prepossessed opiniators think their own exposition of the text so evident, that they chide the perverseness of all other men, as though they were resolved to wink against the light. 'Tis like a person of a fretful constitution, whose eyes are also tinged with the *jaundice*, he quarrels with every man that he meets, because he will not consent to call all things yellow. Thus by the false light of affection in which they behold some beloved texts, and their negligence of all others, or at least by the colours of prejudice that they throw upon them, each triumphs in his own sentiments, and pronounces the apostles and prophets of his side. Then he lets fly many a sharp invective against all the men that presume to oppose him ; for in his sense they oppose the apostles themselves, and fight against the authority of God.

But when a man takes a bible into his hand without a pre-conceived scheme in his head,

and though he may make use of systems to secure himself from inconsistencies, yet he puts them not in the place of the holy scriptures, but resolves to form his body of divinity by the new testament, and derive all his opinions and practices thence ; he will then find so many expressions that seem to favour the several contending parties of christians, that in some points he will perhaps be tempted to doubt of all opinions, and sometimes have much ado to secure himself from the danger of eternal scepticism : when in any doubtful point his judgment is led to a determination, it is always with great caution, and by slow degrees : he is not carried by violence to any dogmatical conclusion ; he is modest in his assertions, and gentle towards all whose judgment and conscience have determined them another way, because he met with so many probable arguments on their side, in the time of his dubitation and inquiry, that had almost fixed his opinion the same way too.

If I may be permitted to speak of myself, I might acquaint the world with my own experience. After some years spent in the perusal of controversial authors, and finding them insufficient to settle my judgment and conscience in some great points of religion, I resolved to seek a determination of my thoughts from the epistles of *St. Paul*, and especially in that weighty doctrine of justifi-

cation : I perused his letter to the *Romans* in the original, with the most fixed meditation, laborious study, and importunate requests to God, for several months together : first without consulting any commentator, and afterwards called in the assistance of the best criticks and interpreters. I very narrowly observed the daily motions of my own mind : I found it very hard to root out old prejudices, and to escape the danger of new ones : I met with some expressions of the apostle that swayed me towards one opinion, and others that inclined the balance of my thoughts another way ; and it was no easy matter to maintain my judgment in an equal poise, till some just and weighty argument gave the determination ; so many crossing notions, perplexing difficulties and seeming repugnances lay in my way, that I most heartily bless the divine goodness that enabled me at last to surmount them all, and established my judgment and conscience in that glorious and forsaken doctrine of the justification of a sinner in the sight of God, by the imputation of a perfect righteousness which is not originally his own.

From my own experiment I can easily guess what confounding intricacies of thought others pass through in their honest searches after truth. These conflicts did exceedingly enlarge my soul, and stretched my charity to a vast extent. I see, I feel, and am assured

that several men may be very sincere, and yet entertain notions in divinity, all widely different. I confess now and then some opinions, or some unhappy occurrences are ready to narrow and confine my affections again, if I am not watchful over myself ; but I pray God to preserve upon my heart a strong and lasting remembrance of those days and those studies, whereby he laid within me the foundation of so broad a charity.

V. *Fifthly.* Another cause of uncharitableness is a *want of reflection on the grounds of our own opinions.* We should be more just to ourselves, and more gentle to others, if we did but impartially review the reasons why we first embraced our several principles and practices.

Perhaps it was education determined most of them, then let us chide ourselves severely for building upon so careless and slight a bottom : or let us be civil to the greatest part of mankind, who came by all their principles the same way. Perhaps we were led into particular notions by the authority of persons whom we reverence or love ; then we should not upbraid our neighbours that have been influenced into different sentiments by the same springs. Perhaps we have felt interest sometimes ready to bias our thoughts, and give us a secret inclination or aversion to a party ; let us then pity the frailty of human

nature, and have compassion upon men whose judgments are exposed to so mean a bribery, and sometimes have been warped aside from the truth. Or, finally, perhaps it was deep meditation, a daily search into scripture, and fervent prayer were the methods by which we pursued knowledge, and established our principles upon solid reason. Let us then be so charitable to those whom we contend with, as to suppose they sought after truth the same way, and then our contentions will have less fire and spleen in them, less of clamour and indignation against those that differ from us.

The true reason why we kindle our anger against our christian brethren that are not entirely of our party is, because we not only have the vanity to fancy ourselves always in the right, and them in the wrong ; but we judge their consciences and their sincerity too, that they did not come honestly and fairly by their principles, while we never consider how we ourselves came by our own.

VI. But there are still more ways to arrive at this uncharitable temper. I must proceed, *Sixthly* ; which is a common method, and thus to be performed. If we will but *trace the principles of those that dissent from us through all the length of remote and feeble consequences, and be sure to find some terrible absurdity at the end of them*, we shall not easily maintain our charity. O how often do

we put their opinions upon the rack ! we torture every joint and article of them, till we have forced them to confess some formidable errors which their authors never knew or dreamed of : thus the original notions appear with a frightful aspect, and the sectators of them grow to be the object of our abhorrence, and have forfeited their right to every grain of our charity.

Evangello believes that *Christ Jesus* has completely answered the demands of the law in order to our justification, and that in the room and stead of all believers. *Nomineus* hears this doctrine, and thus begins his chain of severe and false deductions ; then (saith he) the law has no power to demand obedience of us ; then we are not to be charged with sin, though we break the law hourly and profanely ; then we may condemn all the commands, sport with the threatenings, and defy God the lawgiver and the avenger. He proceeds then to pronounce *Evangello* a wicked *Antimonian*, and in the name of the Lord delivers him up to Satan, that he may learn not to blaspheme. *Evangello*, on the other hand, (who has been well instructed in the way of salvation, and has learned the duties of faith and hope, but is not yet so well improved in the charity of the gospel) hears *Nomineus* preaching up repentance and sincere obedience, as the conditions of our justification

and acceptance with God to eternal life : he smites his breast with his hand, and cries, surely this man knows no use of *Christ* in our religion, he makes void his righteousness and his death, he is a mere legalist, a papist, a rank *Socinian*, he *preaches another gospel, and though he were an angel from heaven let him be accursed*. Thus when men dress up their neighbours in all the strained consequences of their opinions, with a malicious pleasure they pursue this thread of argument, they impose horrid conclusions which can never be drawn from their doctrines, and never leave the pursuit till they have pushed each other to blasphemy and damnation.

Whereas if the doctrines and the persons now mentioned were put into the balances of truth and charity, perhaps the principles of *Evangelio* would be found to have most weight of scripture on their side, and *Nomineus* more of the fair shews of reasoning : but neither the one would be found to throw *Christ* out of his religion, nor the other to make void the law : and both of their lives would appear shining in holiness, but that they want the bright garments of charity.

VII. Let me name a *seventh* spring of this uncharitable humour ; and that is, *when we magnify circumstantial differences into substantial ones, and make every punctilio of*

our own scheme a *fundamental point*, as though all the law and the prophets hung upon it, as though it were the ground and pillar of all the truth in the gospel. *Crucius* will not allow his dissenting neighbour to be a member of the christian church, because he separates from the modes of worship in the church of *England*; he cannot believe him to be a friend to *Christ* crucified, because he refuses to have his child baptized with the airy sign of the cross. Again the dissenting neighbour pronounces *Crucius* to be a mere formalist, and to have nothing of the spirit of God in him, because he seeks not much to obtain the gifts of the spirit, and scarce ever addresses himself to God in prayer without the assistance of a form.

Sabbaptēs that lives within two doors of them, will not believe either of his neighbours to be a christian, because they have never been plunged under water, (*i. e.*) in his sense they were never baptized: and both of them in requital agree to call *Sabbaptēs* a *jew*, because he worships only on a *Saturday*. Whereas the all-knowing God looks down into all their hearts, beholds the graces that his spirit hath wrought there, owns them all for his children and the disciples of his Son, though they are not yet perfect in love. They have all one common God and father, one lord Jesus, one faith, one spirit of prayer,

one baptism, though they quarrel so bitterly about times, and modes, and forms.

It is a very uncharitable practice to think that a man can never journey safely to heaven unless his hat and shoes be of the same colour with ours, unless he tread the very tract of our feet, and his footsteps too be of the same size. It is a censorious and perverse fancy to pronounce a man no christian because every thought of his soul, and all the atoms of his brain are not just ranged in the same posture with mine. How ridiculously unreasonable is it for a man of brown hair to shut his brother out from the rank and species of men, and call him an ox or a lion because his locks are black or yellow. I am persuaded there is a breadth in the narrow road to heaven, and persons may travel more than seven a-breast in it : and though they do not trace precisely the same track, yet all look to the same saviour *Jesus*, and all arrive at the same common salvation : and though their names may be crossed out of the records of a particular church on earth, where charity fails, yet they will be found written in the Lamb's book of life, which is a record of eternal love, and shall for ever be joined to the fellowship of the catholick church in heaven.

VIII. This iniquity of uncharitableness has more springs than there are streams or branches belonging to the great river of

Egypt ; and it is as fruitful of serpents and monsters too : itself is a *hydra* of many heads ; I have drawn seven of them out at length into open light ; that they may be cut off for ever : but there are others still remain as full of fire and infection. Shall I mention an *eighth* here, the *applause of a party, and the advance of self-interest* ? Have we never observed what a mighty prevalence this has over the hearts and tongues of men, and inflames them with malice against their neighbours ? They assault every different opinion with rage and clamour : they rail at the persons of all other parties to ingratiate themselves with their own ; and when they find their account in it, their tongues are sharpened as drawn swords ; they fight for honour like young volunteers, or like the *Switzers* for pay. When they tear away men from their habitations, cast them into noisome prisons, and put to death the ministers of the gospel, they boast, like *Jehu* when he slew the priests of *Baal*, *come and see my zeal for the Lord* : and as he designed hereby to establish the kingdom in his own hands, so they to maintain the preferments and possessions, as well as the reputation they had acquired among their own sect. But ah ! how little do they think of the wounds that *Jesus* the Lord receives by every bitter reproach they cast on his followers ! nor will it be found a sufficient

reason for the persecution of them one day, that they did not conform to human inventions.

The *Jansenists* in *France* have made some reformation in the doctrines of *popery*, and they have been sometimes traduced for approaching the tents of *Calvin*: they have been in danger of being degraded and losing their spiritual dignities, and they are pushed on by this fear and ambition, to write at every turn some severe invectives against the *Calvinists*, to shew that themselves are true sons of that uncharitable church of *Rome*.

Sicco has lately departed from a *Baptist* society, and he hardly thinks himself sufficiently come out of the water, till he is kindled into a flame against all those that baptize by immersion; he rails at his former brethren, to make the *Presbyterian* and *Independent* churches believe that he is a true convert: how art thou mistaken, poor *Sicco*, to attempt this method of caressing thy new acquaintance? For they had rather receive a *Baptist* into their fellowship, whose faith and holiness are conspicuous in his life, than open their doors to an uncharitable wretch that proves his conversion only by the change of an opinion, and placing his religion in railing.

Acerbion has left the communion of his father, and is become an ecclesiastick of high

note in a more powerful and splendid church : he seldom puts a volume into the press without sourness and hard words in it, against the society which he has forsaken : his pen is dipt in gall daily, and he grows old in malice and censure : it is pity he should so far expose the church to which he belongs, as to think that she will esteem him a more dutiful son, by how much the less charity he has for his dissenting brethren.

And I am sorry also that there should be a church in *Great-Britain* which has devoted christians to the Devil for little differences, and has exposed them to tedious and sharp sufferings for refusing to submit to particular gestures in worship and airy signs, for wearing a short garment in prayer in the place of a long one, or black instead of white ; and some of her sons have delighted to execute these censures, when they have found much gain arising from this severe godliness. - I could wish she had always exercised the same charity to weak consciences that she does to slender purses ; for she allows a christian liberty to *poor beneficed men and curates, not being able to provide themselves long gowns, that they may go in short ones.*

IX. A *ninth* spring of this uncharitable practice is *fixing upon some necessary and special point in christianity, and setting it up*

in opposition to the rest, or at best in opposition to some one of the rest.

“ I have long observed,” says an ingenious writer, “ that *christians of different parties* have been eagerly laying hold on *particular parts* of the *system of divine truths*, and have been contending about them as if *each* had been *all* ; or as if the separation of the members from each other, and from the head, were the preservation of the body, instead of its destruction. They have been zealous to espouse the defence, and to maintain the honour and usefulness of *each apart* ; whereas their honour as well as usefulness, seems to me to lie much in *their connexion* : and suspicions have often arisen betwixt the respective defenders of each, which have appeared as unreasonable and absurd, as if the preparations for securing one part of a ship in a storm were to be censured as a contrivance to sink the rest.” Thus far Dr. *Doddridge* in a late preface.

And I think we may as well borrow the similitude expressly from the scripture itself, 1 Cor. xii. 14, &c. *The body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, is it therefore not of the body ?* and how ridiculous would it be if we should suppose the *ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where were the*

hearing ? if the whole were hearing, where were the smelling ? and if they all were one member, where were the body ? the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee ; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you ; now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

In the same manner, repentance, faith and love are three necessary graces or virtues that go to make up a christian ; and I might cite several texts of scripture, where each of these three are made necessary to christianity. Is it not therefore a most unreasonable thing to set up either repentance, faith or love so high, as though the whole of christianity was contained in it, when it is evident that nothing else can make a christian but such a faith as brings with it repentance and good works, or holiness of life, or such a love as produces obedience and good works, which must be the effect of this faith ?

In christianity *nothing avails but such a faith as works by love* unto all holiness, *Gal. v. 6. Repent and believe the gospel*, was the first preaching of Christ and his apostles, *Mark i. 15.* And in other places, faith is indispensably coupled with repentance, *Acts iii. 19. xx. 21.* Without repentance our sins will not be forgiven us. Without faith in Jesus Christ we have no interest in his salvation. True faith must be such as *purifies the*

heart, Acts xv. 9. And produces good works as the necessary evidences to prove our faith true, *James* ii. 17, 18.

What a strange sort of monstrous Christian would this be, who pretended to much faith, but had no love nor repentance? and as monstrous would that pretender be, who had love or repentance without faith. As *God hath set the members of the body, every one of them as it hath pleased him*, so has he appointed *faith, repentance and love* to fulfil their several offices in the christian life. What a piece of madness therefore is it, and high inconsistency to separate those things which God hath joined in his gospel? or to preach or paraphrase very long, and talk very much upon any one of these, so as to hinder that due respect that is to be paid to the other two? No man is nor can be a true believer in *Christ*, if he has not *repentance and love*, producing good works, as well as that *faith* which is necessary to make a christian. Let us take heed therefore, lest we give occasion by any of our discourses to exalt one of these virtues or graces to the prejudice of the rest, for the utter loss of either of them will destroy all our pretences to christianity.

When *Solfido* has formed one of his Christians exactly agreeable to the shape and humour of his own imagination, and dressed him up in all the feathers of strict orthodoxy

that he can find in the severest writers, and by a motto written upon his forehead has called him the *man of faith*, I am at a loss to know what christian church would receive him into their communion, when he neither professes *repentance*, nor *holiness*, nor true *love* to God or man. It has indeed some of the appearances of a *christian* statue, but it is a man without feet or hands for walking or moving, a man without life or activity to run the christian race, or to do any thing for God in the world. What glory can our Lord *Jesus Christ* receive from such a useless figure? what honour can such an imperfect image possibly bring to the gospel; or what service can he be of in the world or in the church?

X. The most common cause of uncharitableness, and the last I shall mention, is, that *a great part of the professors of our holy religion, make their heads the chief seat of it, and scarce ever suffer it to descend and warm their hearts.* *Jesus* the saviour has been discovered to them in a good degree of outward light, but has never been revealed in them with power, nor their souls changed by divine grace into the image of the gospel. While they boast of their orthodox faith, they forget their christian love.

Stellino has stuck his brain all over with notions, and fancies his higher sphere sufficiently illuminated for the conduct of man-

kind, that is round about him, and beneath him : but this set of notions is like a winter-night overhung with stars ; bright and shining, but very cold. Natural affections have no room in his soul, 'tis too much spiritualized with opinions and doctrines. His divinity lies all in his understanding, and the common duties of humanity scarce ever employ his tongue or his hands.

If a man does but profess every tittle of his creed, and believe just as *Stellino* believes, he is declared fit for holy communion ; and if he will but dispute warmly for the hard words that distinguish his scheme, and can pronounce *Shibboleth* well, he shall not be adjudged to death or damnation, but joined heartily to the fellowship of the saints, though his flaming immoralities proclaim him a son of *Satan* : *Satan* himself has perhaps a more accurate and nice skill of the controversies of divinity, than the best of our professors and doctors have arrived at ; but his pride and malice are chains of darkness, and make a devil of him in spite of all his knowledge : yet *Stellino* affects too near a resemblance to *Lucifer*, that fallen son of the morning.

Vices that are odious to human nature, and wild licentiousnesses of a bitter tongue which destroy all civil society, are very little faults in his opinion, when put into the balance with orthodoxy and zeal. If my conversation

among men be blameless and honourable ; if my practice consist of virtue and piety ; if I profess a solemn faith in *Christ* the eternal word, the only begotten Son of God, who came into the flesh, who died to make a true atonement for the sins of men, and testify my unfeigned subjection to him, and declare the grounds of my hope ; yet I must not be admitted to the special parts of worship where *Stellino* presides, because I am not arrived at his degree of light, and differ from his expressions a little, when I explain the words *justification* and the *covenant* of grace. His lips are ever full of declamation and controversy, and he harangues copiously upon the most affecting points of our religion ; he talks much of the amazing condescensions of divine mercy, and of the kindness and love of God our saviour towards man ; but it has not yet taught him love to his fellow-creatures, nor kindness towards his brethren.

Such another christian is *Misander* ; he reverses the duties of christianity which *St. Paul* describes, *he speaks evil* of all men but his own party, he is a *brawler* and *ungentle*, *shewing meekness* unto none ; and while he pretends *that the grace of God which brings salvation has appeared* unto him, he *lives still in malice and envy*, and wears the visible characters of the men of heathenism, *hateful and hating one another*, Tit. ii. 11, 12. Tit. iii.

2, 3, 4. He flourishes and enlarges upon the gracious qualities of our Redeemer, our great *High-priest*, who is *touched with the feeling of our infirmities* ; yet himself has not learnt from so glorious an example to *have compassion on them that are ignorant and out of the way* ; but rather being exalted in his own knowledge, he condemns *his weak brother to perish, for whom Christ died*. Take thy bible, O vain man, and read a few lines in the 8th chapter of St. *Pāul's* first epistle to *Corinth*. *Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth ; and if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know ; but if any man love God, the same is known of him*. And St. *John* will assure thee, *that he that loveth not his brother knoweth not God, and if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar*, 1 John iv. 8, 20.

Yet let not any one think that I advance charity so high, as to place it in the room of knowledge and faith, or to make it a self-sufficient ground for our admittance into heaven at last : nor can I suppose it alone to be a sufficient plea for a reception into any visible church of *Christ* on earth. A confession of the name of *Jesus*, with the most important and most necessary articles of his blessed religion, a declaration of my personal faith or trust in him, together with a solemn dedica-

tion of myself unto the Lord, may be justly required of me by that christian society into which I desire admittance. In default of these, the biggest instances of charity will never constitute me a christian : *except ye believe that I am he*, saith our Saviour, *ye shall die in your sins*, John viii. 24. *If a man strive for a prize, yet is he not crowned unless he strive lawfully ; (i. e.)* according to the methods prescribed in the gospel, the knowledge and the faith of the Son of God, 2 Tim. ii. 5. and the sentence of our Lord is dreadful and peremptory. *He that believeth not shall be damned*, Mark xvi. 16. *With the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*, Rom. x. 10. But without charity my faith can never be true, for it must be such a *faith as worketh by love*, and discovers itself by all the *fruits of the spirit, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance*, Gal. v. 6, 22.

Thus far have we traced the vice of uncharitableness in many of the properties that belong to it, and the causes of it, and many instances in which it discovers itself in the world, and in the church ; and it appears a very shameful vice, and opposite to the religion of the blessed *Jesus*.

SECT. II.

An occasional Vindication of the Apostles from the charge of Uncharitableness.

But what shall we say to those who take the venerable names of the sacred writers, and charge them with the same scandalous practice?

There is one *Momus*, who is well known in the world for a person that is ready to find fault with the best of men, and the best of things, if he can suspect any thing which he imagines worthy of blame in them. This man rather than not vindicate himself from the charge of *uncharitableness*, he will bring even the apostles themselves into the accusation, particularly *St. Paul* and *St. John*.

Paul, says he, must be a very uncharitable man, for *Héb. x. 25, 26*, he tells us, that *if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins*. Thus it is plain, he will not suffer a man to be guilty of any wilful sin, after his profession of christianity, but he damns him for it, without hope.

Ans. But I would have *Momus* consider that these are the very words of scripture and inspiration, and not merely *St. Paul's* opinion. Nor is the sense true which he puts upon these words : it is by no means every wilful

sin after we have received and professed *christianity*, that will bring us under such an irreversible condemnation ; but this *wilful sin*, as it stands in the context, plainly refers to our entire quitting the *profession* of our *christian* faith, v. 23, and *forsaking* all christian *assemblies*, without repentance or returning to them, as v. 25. And it is no wonder if a man who roundly renounces christianity *wilfully*, and without persecution, or any compulsion, should be laid under this dreadful sentence.

Let it be also particularly remarked, that as these verses come in just after the apostle had been speaking of the atoning *sacrifice for sin*, which *Christ* himself offered, as a fulfilling of all typical sacrifices and atonements of the *Jewish* law, c. ix. 10. he expresses this condemning sentence in this language, *there is no more sacrifice for sin, i. e.* if a man renounces the sacrifice of atonement which *Christ* has made for sin, there remains no more sacrifice for him to trust in, or to hope for, *but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.* Thus it appears, that this wilful sinner is condemned for renouncing the only method of atonement provided for the pardon of sins, which it was one of the chief glories of the *christian* religion to reveal and establish.

St. *Paul* also is charged with high *uncharitableness* by this *Momus* for what he says, Gal. i. 8, 9. *If any man preach any other gospel to you than that ye have received, let him be accursed*, and yet he owns v. 7. that it is *not another gospel*, but merely a *perversion of the gospel of Christ* ; and is this enough to be accursed for ?

Answ. Let *Momus* consider how grossly the gospel must be perverted, when it is turned into such a sense as the *Galatians* seem to have been taught by these troublers of their church, v. 7. it is such an error as would have carried them again into *Judaism* with all its *yokes of bondage*, would have obliged them *to be circumcised* and to observe the *Jewish festival days, months and years*, Gal. v. 2. Such an error as shews them to have run back to the ceremonies of the *Jewish law for justification* and acceptance with God, v. 4. Such an error as gave occasion to the apostle to charge them, *if ye pursue it, ye are fallen from grace*, i. e. from the gospel of grace : and that *Christ would profit them nothing, would become of no effect to them*. v. 2, and 4..

And after all it must be said these are the words of scripture, and of the spirit of God, and not merely of St. *Paul* himself as a private writer ; and will the man deal thus with scripture ? You see to what lengths this temper will carry a man.

But still he pursues his accusation against the apostles, and makes St. *John* to be grossly guilty of want of charity in his 2d *epistle*, v. 9, 10. *If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, i. e. the doctrine of Christ mentioned in the foregoing verse, receive him not into your house, nor bid him God speed ; for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.*

Now to answer the unreasonable censure of this *Momus*, let us inquire what this *doctrine of Christ* is ; and where should we find the most important parts of it but in the same writer ? chap. i. 7. *The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.* chap. ii. 2. *Jesus Christ the righteous is not only our advocate with the father, but he is also the propitiation for our sins,* chap. iv. 10. *God loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins,* and that every true christian is *born of God*, chap. v. 1, 4. i. e. as other verses of this holy writer in his gospel explain it, he is *born of the spirit of God*, *John* i. 13, iii. 5, 6.

It appears then that the errors of such whom the apostle would here exclude from our friendship, are such as do not acknowledge *Jesus Christ* to be the *Messiah*, or not to be a *propitiary sacrifice for the sins of men*, nor allow that every true christian is regenerated and *born of God*, or of his spirit, i. e. by the powerful, renewing, and sanctifying in-

fluences thereof as other scriptures explain it, particularly *John* i. 12, 13. *John* iii. 3, 5. and as *St. Paul* expresses it, *Eph.* i. 19, 20. *By such a mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.*

Again, I would ask *Momus*, why are the names of *Christ* and the *holy spirit* appointed so generally to be used in baptism, which is the ordinance which initiates us into christianity? is it not to put us in mind that when we profess christianity we profess the chief articles that relate to him as our Saviour, (*viz.*) *Jesus Christ* to be the propitiation for our sins, we profess to be *born of the spirit*, or regenerated and renewed to holiness by the spirit of God? now if a man asserts himself to be a christian, when he believes and professes neither of these doctrines, then *St. John* may be to blame indeed in denying the benefit of common christian friendship to such a man.

But whither would this *Momus* lead us? what? would he make a christian out of such adversaries to the name and gospel of *Christ*, as neither trust in him as a propitiation for their sins, nor hope to be renewed and made holy by the holy spirit of God?

Let us learn of the *heathen* poet,

Est modus in rebus, sunt certi denique fines.

There must be some measures and bounds set to every general virtue, and even to *chris-*

tian charity itself. This does not extend to infidels in the same sense. Surely, there must be due limits set to every thing of this kind : They can scarce be justly called *christians*, and treated *as such*, let their profession be what it will, who renounce *Jesus Christ* in his chief design of coming into the world, as a propitiation for sin, and who renounce the spirit of God as the effectual spring of our regeneration and holiness. If all *deists* and *infidels* may be received into the *christian* church, into our good esteem and friendship, those may also be our fellow christians who deny the most important principles of christianity : but let us take heed that we do *not give that which is holy to such as have no claim to it*, and give charity and christian friendship to those, who seem, according to the word of God, to have no pretence to it.

It has been *objected* indeed against this second as well as against the *third epistle* of St. *John*, that they have not sufficient proof of their divine original : now it would be too large in this place to enter into a discussion of that question : but there is nothing said in this epistle that is disagreeable to the sense of other holy writers in other parts of scripture ; and by our protestant writers these epistles have been generally represented as part of the word of God in the new testament : nor

can I find sufficient reason to reject it, merely because some persons that need a more abundant measure of indulgence and of charity, than the scripture seems to allow, will not allow it this post of honour, and that is because it excludes them from our good esteem, from *Christian* communion and friendship.

Yet after all this censure of *Momus* and his followers, if any such there be, I would still hope and persuade myself, there are some serious and pious souls who have been honestly seeking after the truths of religion, and searching the word of God to find them, who may have indulged some incautious and unhappy hour, wherein they have suffered themselves to be led away into this great snare and temptation of the evil one ; so that they have begun to doubt of this blessed doctrine of the atoning sacrifice for sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, though it is so strongly, so expressly, and so often asserted by several of the apostles in their writings.

It is my sincere and earnest desire, that God would speedily break these unhappy snares, whatsoever they are, by which their thoughts have been captivated into so dangerous a mistake, 2 *Tim.* ii. 25, 26. that he would please to open the eyes of their mind by his enlightening grace, that they may not run on so far in this way as to be exposed to the loss of the benefit of this only propitiation

for sin, and lay themselves open to that severe sentence of the word of God, that *there remains no further propitiatory sacrifice for them, but a certain fearful expectation, &c.* Heb. x. 26, 27. Forgive me, blessed Jesus, if any of the softer influences of animal nature have warped me aside, while I am treating of this glorious virtue of charity, to indulge these milder sentiments, and depart in any measure from the stricter sense and sentence of thy holy word.

SECT. III.

The mischievous effects of Uncharitableness.

Now if we have not dwelt too long on this subject, *viz.* in tracing out this mischief through its several springs and properties, and if my reader be not quite out of breath, I would ask him to take another turn with me and walk down to a short survey of the same vice in its mischievous effects ; that we may be more warmly animated to pursue this iniquity to the death : if it were possible, we would leave it neither root nor branch, name or memory in the christian world.

I. The first and most obvious mischiefs I meet with among Christians of an uncharitable humour, are the constant disquiet of their own spirits, the vexation they give their

neighbours, the injury they do to their own edification, and to the edification of all that converse with them.

Singulario has a set of notions and rules whereby he adjusts his own creed and his practice; and whatsoever he hears in religious conference, or in publick duty, that does not precisely square to his model, disquiets his ears, disrelishes with his taste, disturbs his conscience, and thus prevents all the benefit that his soul should receive from the discourse, or worship.

I grant it very lawful for a man to be disgusted with a sermon, where the greatest part is spent in notions contrary to his judgment, and dressed up in language very foreign to his usual way of converse about divine things; this is shocking to the spirit of the best christians, and the conscience is so nauseated with the largest part of the entertainment, that his soul cannot be nourished, and it is proper for him to forbear attendance upon such a preacher, and choose one more suited to the temper of his own spirit. But *Singulario* hath an aversion to a whole hour's discourse, because there were three sentences of a strain different from his opinion. He reaps no blessing from a sermon of excellent composure, of divine materials, of an evangelick frame and just method, because there is one expression in it that is the characteristick of another sect.

He sits uneasy under a noble discourse of justification or of faith, because (it may be) the minister doth avoid the terms *imputed*, *meritorious*, *condition*, and *instrument* ; and mentions none of the tortured words of noise and party.

I will not indeed commend a preacher that is always affecting to disguise his own opinions, and for ever hiding himself in ambiguous language, and that in points of moment, thereby to maintain the everlasting applause of all sides. But I must chide *Singulario* for the wry faces he makes at church when he hears but a word or two of contrary sound, or when his ears miss, and long for a set of darling phrases.

Three years ago I was in company with *Acharissa*, a sour old christian of a very narrow spirit, and gave her a gentle admonition for the frequent reproaches she cast on the ministers of Christ, that did not preach exactly according to her humour ; I blamed that petulant liberty which she took with all her neighbours and acquaintance, to censure them severely for every lesser difference of practice or worship : I recommended to her reading that valuable sermon of the Reverend Dr. *Tillotson* against evil-speaking ; but I could not persuade her to peruse those pages, not only because of that strong propensity she had to speak evil of others, but because

it was the work of an archbishop ; “ which sort of office, said she, is a mere human invention, and the scripture knows it not.” I know another name which has the same narrow spirit. *Sequilla* hath ever given up the conduct of her soul to the curate of her parish, and after many years attendance on his ministry, in great security of conscience, is well assured that she shall go to heaven at last. Perhaps by some terrible providence, or by some plain word of scripture, she is awakened to a deep and frightful sense of sin, and danger of eternal death. She is visited by the curate, and though he saith some good things to her, yet she finds not the way of peace. A kind neighbour recommends to her some book of consolation written by a dissenter, but she refuses the book and the comfort at once, lest she should be guilty of that damnable sin of separation from the church. “ How can I ever, said she, expect the peace of God from the pen of a schismatick ?” and thus endures the racks of conscience rather than she will indulge charity enough to hear or to read what a nonconformist hath written.

Presbycolo, a christian of the same stamp, heard a sermon lately and commended it above measure, confessed how much light and love was kindled in his heart by it, and bestowed

unusual strains of respect upon the minister : But *Presbyclo* (said I) “ this man never had the hands of a bishop, or preaching elder, laid upon his head to ordain him.” At once I saw his colour change, his spirits sink, and he concluded that all the divine affections in his soul under that sermon must needs be counterfeit, “ because now I know (said he) the preacher is no minister of Christ.” O the wretched influence of this vice of uncharitableness upon feeble and deluded souls ! it proceeds so far at last as to make persons scrupulous of attending upon any ordinance, lest the admistrator should not be a man exactly of their stamp. Thus their hearts are vexed with everlasting disquiet, for they can hardly hear a prayer, or an exhortation, but they find some offence in it ; like a man with a thorn in his hand, whatsoever he takes hold of gives him pain, but the cause lies in his own flesh.

There are other instances of this kind to be met with in the world. *Nitidelli* wears his hair three inches below his shoulders, and it is ever well beautified with powder : he frequently eats of a dish of food where blood is one of the ingredients, and he often takes half a pint of red wine to his own share : he maintains serious religion at home and abroad : but *Censorina* cannot join him in the special ordinances of worship. “ It is a shame for

him (she cries) to wear long hair ; he is a wine-bibber, and he abstains not from blood ; nor can I be reconciled to him upon any terms, unless he retrench these horrible excesses." But he still goes on careless and regardless of the peace of his fellow-christian, and scorns her little clamours, rather than endeavour, by gentleness and compliance, to satisfy or remove them. *Now walkest thou not charitably, O Nitidelli, for thou grievest thy sister with thy meat and garments, for whom Christ died.* But I would fain have *Censorina* learn also, that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the holy ghost. Both of you therefore ought to follow after things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. Rom. xiv. 15, 17, 19.

Nor is this mischief confined to single persons : it makes a farther progress still, and infects the neighbour and acquaintance. Every Monday in the evening *Crites* sits at the head of a club, that meet together to arraign and sentence the sermons of the foregoing day. " Did you mark, my friends, such an expression under the fourth head ? it sounded harsh in my ears. Surely the man is not orthodox ; pray acquaint your families of the danger of his opinions, and forbid their attendance. " Truly, replies *Momion*, he insisted so much on the grace of God, that he left but

one quarter of his hour-glass for the duties of the gospel ; I fear he is a *supralapsarian*, my spirit rises against him, and I must warn my acquaintance of his doctrine." A third person in the company begins to surmise, that his morals are not good : " I have heard an ill story of a preacher not long since, saith he, and surely this must be the man." And then he proceeds in a direct opposition to the grace of charity, as it is described by St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* xii. 5. *Tit.* iii. 3. " I easily believe all that is evil of him ; I am provoked at him ; I hope no good from him ; I cannot bear his principles ; I cannot endure his person ; and I should rejoice in the seasonable death of such an antinomian as this is." Thus does the root of bitterness spring up into wide branches, it bears poisonous fruit, and many souls are troubled. Blessed be God who of late years begins to purge out this sour leaven from amongst us.

II. The next pernicious effect I take notice of, is, that an *uncharitable carriage brings a disgrace and blemish upon christianity, beyond the guilt and scandal of heathenism* : it is the character of the gentiles indeed, that they were *hateful and hating one another* ; but not for different principles of philosophy, which they professed, nor different methods of worship, which they paid to their gods. There were no civil wars proclaimed, nor

courts of inquisition erected amongst them upon this account, though their controversies about divine things were not trivial, and they differed widely in the very foundations of religion ; and, as an ingenious author expresses himself on this subject, “ though poets have made the gods enter into factions and quarrels for commonwealths, yet commonwealths never did the same for their gods.”

But if the heathens had been never so much enraged, and quarrelled never so fiercely for the sake of opinions, and formalities ; still they were almost infinitely more excusable than Christians can pretend to be : for the very doctrines of most of their sects permit revenge ; - and they have many a bloody principle amongst them. But christianity is the most mild, the most gentle, and the most peaceable religion : never a doctrine was taught amongst mankind, that hath so much of love and sweetness in it : never a system, or rule of duties, wherein meekness and candor, charity and compassion are so prescribed, and enforced.

Never was there a religion instituted by God or invented by men, with so much goodness in the heart and soul of it, or so many charms and amiablenesses in the face. It is built upon the foundation of God's eternal and unchangeable love. It was love that

assumed human nature, and became the great prophet and teacher of it, and the spirit of love in our hearts is its vital spring within us : it is divine love dwelling in flesh, hanging upon a cross, bleeding, and dying for enemies and rebels, that hath purchased all the promised blessings of our religion ; and it is the same love arising from the grave, and reigning in glory, that distributes these blessings to men : and in all the melting language of compassion and tenderness invites us to receive them : it was this love dwelling personally amongst men, calls himself our brother, and charges us to love all the professors of the same faith as brethren : he requires that we should be ready to lay down our lives for one another, as he did for us all : and orders it to be the distinguishing character of all his followers, *hereby shall all men know, that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another*, John xiii. 34, 35.

God himself is infinite and unseen love, Christ is love incarnate and visible : and a christian is or should be an effigy of that love graven to the life, by the finger of the divine spirit. Now, for the professors of such a doctrine to quarrel about trifles, and grow malicious upon every punctilio of different sentiments, how grossly do they abuse the christian name ? they rob their own religion of its due honour amongst men, and bring in-

finite shame and discredit upon christianity in the face of infidel nations. It is for the sake of this madness which is found amongst the pretended followers of our blessed Lord, his name is blasphemed among the heathens ; and the conversion of the kingdoms of this world to the faith of Christ, rendered almost rationally impossible.

III. *Thirdly*, this uncharitable temper rages even to wars and blood ; hath laid the churches of Christ desolate, and dispeopled many countries in christendom. It doth not spend itself in secret like a sullen humour, or a vapour of melancholy, but breaks out into publick violence and disorder, and all that is near it feels the indignation. It sits brooding over the eggs of a cockatrice, and daily sends forth a fiery flying serpent, instruments of cruelty are in its habitation, and all its children are sons of blood and rapine.

O my soul, come thou not into their counsel ; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united ; for in their anger they have slain millions of men, and in their self-will they have digged up the foundations of a thousand churches. Cursed be their anger for it is fierce, and their wrath for it is cruel. These men of division at the last judgment day, may justly expect to be divided from Jacob, and to be scattered far away from the Israel of God. *For God will render to every one ac-*

cording to their works. And surely these bloody persecutions are such works as demand like revenges from a God of justice ; if such as practise them die without repentance.

If you ask me the method whereby this uncharitable temper has advanced to such a degree of rage and barbarity, it is very obvious and easy to be explained. At first these men assume to themselves the name of the church, and lodge in themselves a sort of infallibility, or at least pretend to a divine authority to determine finally all doubtful cases of religion, and to rule over the consciences of men. They set up the wretched trade of creed-making, and demand the belief of mankind : then they give out decrees, such as Christ and his apostles never gave, and pronounce damnation against all that doubt or misbelieve them ; though their fables are not cunningly devised, because they are made too big for belief. Some of them contradict the most substantial principles of sense, reason, and christianity.

You will see this plainly exemplified in a few instances I shall give of their decrees and canons. As, “ Whosoever shall affirm, that there are more or less than seven sacraments, let him be anathematized, excommunicated, or accursed : Whosoever shall affirm that the substance of bread and wine remains in the eucharist, together with the body and blood of

Christ, or shall deny the wonderful change of the whole substance of bread into body, and wine into blood, which the catholick church calls transubstantiation, let him be excommunicated : whosoever shall say, that extreme unction doth not confer grace, nor remit sin, nor ease the sick, let him be excommunicated.”* Thus oftentimes the same anathema and eternal death is denounced against such as disobey their decrees about matters of trifling importance ; matters which they themselves can never pretend to be, in their own nature, necessary to salvation. “ He that shall say a common minister can confirm as well as a bishop, let him be excommunicated : He that shall say, the ceremonies, the vestments, &c. in the celebration of the mass, are incentives to sin, rather than duties of piety, let him be excommunicated : he that shall say, a priest may become a layman again, let him be excommunicated : And whosoever shall say, that the hierarchy of bishops, presbyters, and ministers or deacons is not of divine ordination, let him be excommunicated.”

When this church has thus excommunicated and cursed christians better than herself, and cast them out of her arms, she gives them up to the secular power,† with an awful and

* Canons of the Church of Rome in the Council of Trent.

† See the History of the Inquisition.

deceitful charge, that the obstinate heretick should not be hurt in life or limb ; but with a full design that they shall be tortured, and destroyed. Having solemnly delivered them to the devil in their spiritual courts, the temporal executioner sends them out of the world ; not that their souls may be saved in the day of the Lord, but that they may be plunged immediately into utter darkness, where Satan dwells.

It is the command of Christ to the Roman church, by Paul the great apostle, Rom.xiv.1. *That such as were weak in the faith should be received into their fellowship, and not troubled with doubtful disputations*, such as the observance of meats and days, and things of like moment. But the Romans have now so far rebelled against this rule, as to admit persons into their communion upon no other terms than a blind submission to all the doubtful disputables which that church imposes. They had an order from St. Paul, Rom. xv. 7. *to receive all such as Christ had received* ; and consequently to reject no others but those whom Christ rejects ; but they forgot this charitable canon of our Lord, while they receive thousands to their communion which have no visible marks of the image of Christ, and reject thousands, and curse them to hell, whom the Lord Christ will acknowledge for his, and

pronounce them blessed of his Father at the last day.

When they first begin to assume this sovereignty over faith and conscience, they use a shew of argument, and pretend to instruct and enlighten the weak and ignorant. They admonish them to hearken to the church ; but if the ignorant are still weak in belief, and cannot be convinced of the lawfulness of their ceremonies, then they send the sheriff and the gaoler to carry on the dispute ; a prison and the gibbet are the next arguments ; and when reason and scripture will not assist them, they employ fire and sword to *contend earnestly for the fables that were never delivered to the saints.*

To draw up an account of the horrible effects of uncharitableness would be to transcribe the ecclesiastical history of many ages. Whole churches and quarters of the world, the eastern and western, have damned one another plentifully upon the account of imposed days, and trifles which the gospel leaves indifferent, or rather forbids. How many of the canons of ancient councils have been influenced in their formation by this assuming spirit, and as terribly enforced in their execution to the reproach and devastation of christendom ?

But it moves my grief and wonder, that a modern church, that pretends not to infallibil-

ity, should assume a strange dominion over our faith and practice. It asserts its own power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith ; when in the very preceding words it confesses, that the churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch have erred, so also the church of Rome has erred, not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith. It demands my admiration, that such a church should canonically denounce her excommunications in abundance, against those that dissent from her in some disputable things, while they retain all her professed doctrines of the christian faith.

And it is a pain and a shame to our eyes to look backward upon other times, and to behold pamphlets written against toleration, by such as are ministers of the gospel of peace, that perfect law of liberty. It was their opinion then, (and they told the world so in print) that *sectaries* ought to be silenced by the civil power : now *sectary* is a name of broad dimensions, and has a terrible stretch with it ; the long scourge would in time reach all those who differ from the hand that manages that weapon of chastisement : none must be authorized to preach in any form, but by the solemnity of imposing hands, by a company of authorized men. Because some subjected themselves to the determination of a synod,

they would make it the duty of all their neighbours to wear the same yoke ; and thought others were bound to become slaves to the same dictates. But I forbear this charge, and almost wish it cancelled : for as the magistrate did not put in practice the uncharitable pamphlets, so those reverend and honourable writers have been taught to acknowledge the mistake of their zeal, when their own verbal rods have been turned against them, and became real scorpions with stings and scourges a thousand-fold. The fathers have been dearly instructed in the value of toleration and liberty by most abundant retaliations. The children have learned to preach this part of the gospel well, and I am persuaded they will never forget it again.

If we turn over more ancient annals, the Marian days give us horrible examples of fiery zeal in the clergy, and the glorious reign of the succeeding virgin princess is hardly to be purged from the stain of blood. Blessed be God who has put it into the heart of our civil governours to restrain the fury of all spiritual administrators. The long and dreadful train of capias's and gaolers, prisons and plunderings, ruin and banishment, silencings and violent suppressions are no longer the attendants of the anathemas of any church among us. And I hope no church mourns the loss

of them ; though there are some anathemas that abide still as terrors to those that are weak in faith, and not very honourable monuments of that church's charity.

In these late years the scene of Great Britain was a little shadow of Spain and France, where dragoons and the inquisition manage ecclesiastical discipline. We were brought to the very gates of Aceldama. The agents of Rome were ready with their instruments of death. Adored be the divine Spirit that awakened the rulers of the church to behold the common danger, and raised in them generous resolutions and promises to exercise charity and temper towards their brethren. Glory to that God whose kind providence sent us a deliverer, and forbid England to become a field of blood and martyrdom : and new songs of praise are still due unto divine mercy, for establishing the person and heart of our queen in the throne and the principles of so glorious an example and predecessor. Her gentle government subdues the hearts of all her people to herself ; her charity joins their affections to one another ; her parental care and love reconciles christian parties, and her wisdom unites christian nations.

IV. The last mischief I shall mention, and which should fright us terribly from the peril of it, is, that *an uncharitable man wounds the very vitals of that religion, by which he*

hopes for eternal life : and whilst his fury rages against his brother for accidental differences, he shakes the very foundations of his own christianity, and endangers or prevents his own salvation ; his boasted orthodoxy in opinion is made vain, while his practical ungodlinesses are so real ; and his faith appears to be little better than that of devils, when he mingles so much of their malice with it. In vain does he glory in the brightness of his notions ; in vain doth he presume *darkness is past, and the true light now shineth : for he that sayeth, he is in the light, and hateth his brother, he abides in darkness, even till now,* 1 John ii. 8, 9.

Such a wisdom composed of mere opinion and wrath can never lead aright up to heaven, for it did not descend from thence : *The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy, and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace : but if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not.* Whatever your pretences of truth be, *this is but lying against the truth : this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, carnal, devilish,* Jam. iii. 14, &c. It is impossible there should be true faith without sincere love : *if I understand all mysteries, and have all knowledge, if I speak*

with the tongues of men and angels, and have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and were destitute of charity, my pretensions to religion are the mere sound of noisy brass, or a tinkling cymbal, 1 Cor. xii. 1, 2. It is such a charity that suffereth long, that is not easily provoked, that beareth all things, and believeth all things, that taketh all things in the best sense, and thinketh no evil : it is such a charity as this that is a substantial part of our religion. Charity in the heart, is absolutely required to make up inward christianity ; and the appearance of it in the life is a most necessary part of godliness.

It is true indeed, that all graces and virtues are very imperfect in this present state, and there is much of uncharitableness remaining in many a good man : but that man can never be good that has no charity. *Zelus* has spent his life in declaiming against some little modes and gestures used in worship by his fellow christians, or in imposing some uninstituted ceremonies on the consciences of his brethren. He hath stirred up the magistrate to persecute some of them to prisons, and almost to death. He flattered his conscience with hopes that his zeal for the church should not only render him acceptable at the last day, but provide him a large reward : he now lies languishing upon a bed of sickness, on the very borders of eternity, and

is terribly awakened to behold his own mistake ; while he stands within sight of the tribunal of Christ, and the face of the judge, his former practice appears to his conscience in its true and frightful shape ; the fire that hath animated him against his brethren, now flashes in his soul, and discovers its internal source ; now he dreads to be made an example of the same vengeance among devils, with which he hath pursued his fellow mortals ; he groans out his last breath in bitter agonies ; cries to the God of love for mercy upon his departing spirit ; and expires almost without hope. He is gone. But we leave his soul to the compassions of a God who can better pardon his mighty errors, than he would forgive others in their little mistakes.

Thus dreadfully hath this vice of uncharitableness prevailed against the honour of christianity, and the peace of mankind. Thus sacrilegiously hath it taken away one of the brightest marks of the best religion, and that is love. It hath defaced the beauty of our holy profession, scandalized the sacred name that we bear, made a slaughter-house of the church of Christ, and deceived the souls of men to their own eternal ruin.

Just as I had finished this essay, *Pharisaino* happened to come into my study, and taking up the first leaf, read the title, and was persuaded this discourse must be written against himself.

“No (said I) there is not any man alive personally intended in these papers, but if you please to peruse them, and shall apply the characters to yourself, I hope you will confess divine providence has led you into a conviction of your false zeal.” *Pharisaino* sat him down immediately, and with a running eye passed through every page. And though the frequent wrinkle of his brow discovered his inward chagrin and disgust, yet he paid me many a ceremony ; and “ behold (said he) how language and fancy will dress up zeal like a monster to fright men out of their fervour of spirit.”

“ I have heard,” added he, “ that you have some skill in painting, pray draw me the figure of this uncharitableness in just and proper colours ; this monster which you complain has so narrowed and disgraced, and murdered christianity.” I will attempt it, *Pharisaino*, if you will furnish me with a sheet of large paper, and that of the fairest kind, to represent the christian church in this world. First, I will pare it round, and reduce it to a very small compass ; then with much ink I will stain the whiteness of it, and deform it with many a blot ; at the next sitting I will stab it through rudely with an iron pen ; and when I put the last hand to complete the likeness, it shall be smeared over with blood.

APPENDIX

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

Added by the Dr. himself.

IF the scandal and cruelty of an uncharitable temper have not been described in characters sufficiently frightful, it must be imputed to a want of skill in the hand that attempted it, for there is no want of formidable features in the vice itself. Perhaps a little and unknown pen hath not force enough to wage successful war against this mighty iniquity ; and the printer, in two or three vacant pages, permits me to call in the aid of some great and well known names : names who fought against it in their lives, who being dead, yet speak, and plead heartily that it may be destroyed. They espoused the cause of charity with a warm zeal, being persuaded that it made a considerable part of our religion, and that the contrary humour was destructive to all that is called christian.

Since this infection is not confined to one party of men, but hath spread itself wide through all christian societies among us, I have taken the liberty in the foregoing leaves to strike at it wheresoever I found it ; and those who hide this venom in their heart still, to whatsoever tribe they belong, let them hear the words of their dead fathers : let them

blush at their own folly, and no longer refuse to be healed.

Archbishop *Tillotson* in his works in folio, page 217, acquaints us that “other sects were distinguished by little opinions, or by some external rites and observances in religion; but our Saviour pitches upon that which is the most substantial, the most large and extensive, the most useful and beneficial, the most humane and the most divine quality of which we are capable, and that is love.” And p. 126, he declares that “uncharitableness is as bad an evidence, either of a true christian or a true church, as a man would wish. Damning of men is a very hard thing, and therefore whenever we do it, the case must be wonderfully plain.” And p. 364, “we should rather be contented to err a little on the favourable and charitable part; than to be mistaken on the censorious and damning side. Our blessed Saviour frames his parables with a remarkable bias to the charitable side, to reprove the uncharitableness of the Jews, who positively excluded all the rest of mankind besides themselves, from all hopes of salvation. An odious temper, which to the infinite scandal of the christian name and profession hath prevailed upon some christians to a notorious degree.”

Dr. Owen in his discourse of the person of Christ, p. 222, saith, “one christian who is

meek, humble, kind, patient and useful unto all, that condescends to the ignorance, weaknesses, and infirmities of others, that passes by provocations, injuries and contempt with patience and with silence, (unless where the glory and truth of God call for a just vindication) that pitieth all sorts of men in their failings and miscarriages, who is free from jealousies and evil surmises, that loveth what is good in all men ; and all men, even wherein they are not good, nor do good. doth more express the virtues and excellencies of Christ, than thousands can do with the most magnificent works of piety or liberality where this frame is wanting in them. For men to pretend to follow the example of Christ, and in the mean time to be proud, wrathful, envious, bitterly zealous, calling for fire from heaven to destroy men, or fetching it themselves from hell, is to cry, hail unto him, and to crucify him afresh unto their power."

Mr. Baxter in his christian directory, part I. p. 40, writes thus : " surely if the very life of godliness lay not much in unity and love, we should never have had such words spoken of it as you find in scripture. Love is to the soul as our natural heat is to the body ; whatever destroys it, destroys life ; and therefore cannot be for our good. Be certain, that that opinion, course, or motion, tends to death that tends to abate your love to your

brethren, much more, which under pretence of zeal, provoketh you to hate and hurt them." And a little after, "to limit all the church to your party, and deny all or any of the rest to be christians and parts of the universal church, is schism by a dangerous breach of charity." And p. 41. he asserts, it "a most dangerous thing to a young convert to be ensnared in a sect: it will, before you are aware, possess you with a feverish sinful zeal for the opinions and interest of that sect. It will make you bold in bitter invectives and censures against those that differ from them. It will corrupt your church-communion, and fill your very prayers with partiality and human passions: it will secretly bring malice under the name of zeal into your minds and words: in a word, it is a secret but deadly enemy to christian love and peace. Let them that are wiser and more orthodox and godly than others, shew it as the holy ghost directs them," Jam. iii. 13, &c.

The Baptists in their appendix to their confession of faith, 1677, say, "the discharge of our own consciences, in point of baptism, doth not any ways disoblige or alienate our affections or conversation from any others that fear the Lord; but that we may and do (as we have opportunity) participate of the labours of those whom God hath endued with abilities above ourselves, and qualified

and called to the ministry of the word ; earnestly desiring to approve ourselves to be such as follow after peace with holiness ; and therefore we always keep that blessed Irenicum or healing word of the apostle before our eyes ;” Phil. iii. 15, 16. And at the end of the appendix they declare, “ that in as much as these things (viz.) modes of baptism, &c. are not of the essence of christianity, but that we agree in the fundamental doctrines thereof, we do apprehend there is sufficient ground to lay aside all bitterness and prejudice, and in the spirit of love and meekness to embrace and own each other therein ; leaving each other at liberty to perform such other services (wherein we cannot concur) apart unto God, according to the best of our understanding.”

ESSAY II.

OF THE DIFFICULTIES IN SCRIPTURE, AND THE DIFFERENT OPINIONS OF CHRISTIANS IN THINGS LESS NECESSARY.

SECT. I.

A short Account of these Difficulties.

CONCERNING the doctrines and duties which peculiarly belong to the new testament, I have generally concluded this to be a good rule of judgment, that, according to the degree of their importance or necessity to salvation, such is commonly the degree of their evidence ; and the frequency of their repetition is, for the most part, proportionable to their usefulness. Those great truths of our religion, and those practices of christianity, without which we cannot be saved, are described in the word of God in large and fair characters, so that *he who runs may read them*. These *visions* and revelations of the mind and will of God our sovereign, *are written and made plain upon the tables* of the evangelists, or of the apostles, *Heb. ii. 2.* they are not mentioned once and briefly, but many page

explain and repeat them ; they stand in a divine and convincing light, and may easily be understood by those who wish a humble and teachable spirit, inquire what they must believe and do, in order to please God.

This remark is much confirmed by that promise which assures us, that it should be so in gospel-times. *The high-way to heaven is so plain, that the way-faring men, or strangers, though they be fools in understanding, shall not err therein*, Isai. xxxv. 8. A man that labours in his daily calling, in the city or the field, or a servant in the lowest rank of life, may, with due application in their vacant moments, be acquainted with the necessary truths and duties of our religion ; besides that, the spirit of God is promised to sincere and diligent seekers, to faithful and humble inquirers, and shall be bestowed sufficiently to inform them of the sure way to eternal life, Prov. ii. 1. 6. *If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God*, Luke xi. 13. *Your heavenly father shall give the holy spirit to them that ask him*. And the spirit is sent to guide the faithful into all truth, John xvi. 13.

The wisdom, the equity, and the goodness

of God, seem all to concur in fixing matters of necessary belief and practice in this situation, *i. e.* that they should be often and plainly expressed. If there be any particular doctrine or duty which I find written but in one single text of scripture, or expressed but darkly, I should reasonably conclude the great God never designed that doctrine, or that duty, to be of very great importance in the christian life : for a dark expression is much more easily mistaken, as to the true sense of it ; and a single text is more liable to be *miscopied*, or *dropped* by a transcriber, or be *misconstrued* by a translator, or *overseen and neglected* by a common reader or hearer ; and the great God would not put matters of high importance on so doubtful and dangerous a foot, and leave things necessary at such uncertainties, lest honest and humble *inquirers should*, after all their pains, mistake their way to heaven.

A sudden thought of the form and order of baptism, prescribed to us, Math. xxviii. 18. made me at first suspect, that there must be one exception made to this rule, about the frequent repetition of any doctrine or duty necessary to salvation ; but upon a further consideration and review of things it appears evident to me now, that though this appointment of the form of baptism was prescribed to be done in *the name of the Holy Spirit*, as well as *of the Father and the Son*, yet it was by no

means necessary to the salvation of any man, and therefore there was no necessity of having it often repeated. Let us consider,

1st, That the appointment of it is but once expressed, and that by one holy writer, and there is never an actual example or instance of this complete form of baptism practised in any place of scripture. Observe that remarkable text, Acts xix. 2, where St. Paul inquired of the young converts that were baptised at Ephesus, *have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? and they said unto him, we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.* He then inquired, unto what were ye baptised? and they said, *unto John's baptism;* and Paul had told them that John taught them, that *they should believe on him that should come after him,* that is, in Christ Jesus: *when they heard this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.* Whether they were baptised in the name of the Holy Spirit, or not, is not actually expressed; which is something strange, when that was the chief point of inquiry concerning their baptism into the Holy Ghost.

Here also it may be observed, that those who were here baptised, Acts xix. 5, 6, immediately received the Holy Ghost; whence it may be very probably inferred, that some persons were baptised with the Holy Ghost

itself, who were not actually baptised into the name of the Holy Ghost.

Consider 2dly, When the business of baptism is mentioned in several places in the epistles, it is generally declared that baptism was performed in the name of the Lord Jesus, Rom. vi. 3, so many of you as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death, Gal. iii. 27. As many of you as have been baptised into Christ, 1 Cor. xii. 13. By one spirit we are baptised into one body, i. e. Christ as in the foregoing verse, but I can find no mention of the disciples being baptised into the Holy Ghost.

3dly, Though I am ready to believe from many expressions in the primitive history of the church, that the baptisers did usually keep to this form of words, *I baptise thee in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, yet it is evident from a long account which Grotius gives upon this text, Matt. xxviii. 18, that they used divers forms, that is, they sometimes expressed the *Father* by a periphrasis, *the God of all, or the God of the whole, the God and father of the whole*, sometimes *the Son* was expressed by the word, or the *only begotten Son of God*: sometimes *the Holy Ghost* was expressed by the *spirit who inspired the prophets*.

I might add, that upon their profession of the christian religion, sometimes it is called

the profession of the *remission of sins*, or the *catholick church* or *everlasting life*, but they never made a scruple of their being rightly baptised into salvation upon any of these accounts ; and I am persuaded that had the apostles themselves, or the primitive christians, thought it necessary to salvation, the form of baptism would have been more express in the history of it, and been more particularly repeated.

I think therefore the *rule* may stand good still, that where a doctrine or a duty is mentioned but in one single place of the scripture, it cannot be of absolute necessity to salvation. I hope the reader will forgive this long digression, and then proceed.

On the other hand, where particular truths or duties are often repeated in scripture, and very plainly expressed in several places, it is hardly possible that they should be subject to these inconveniencies. It is not to be supposed that the transcribers of the new testament should make the same mistake in every place, where these propositions are mentioned ; that they should drop them out of every chapter ; that the translator should misconstrue them in every text ; or that their misconstruction should always seem to make good sense in every context where they stand ; or finally that the hearer or reader

should always overlook them when they are found in so many passages, and so often occur to his ear or eye.

But it is very apparent, and all men must acknowledge that matters of less moment, and things not necessary, are not mentioned so often : and when they are mentioned, the scripture sometimes gives no determination or positive injunctions about them ; nor do the apostles determine the smaller controversies with that plain, exact, and positive method of speech, which you find them use in the most substantial truths and duties. If we read the 14th chap. to the Romans, it must convince us of this assertion. St. Paul does not there decide the little controversies about observations of meats and days, but seems to leave them to charity. Nor are the lesser points of christianity half so often mentioned, or urged with half so much vehemence, as the grand duties of faith and love, repentance and holiness. In matters of lower concernment among the formalities and modes of religion, or even in some higher articles, whose circumstances and logical relations are not necessary to salvation, the scripture has its *dusnoeta* et *fere aluta*, as divines call them, *i. e.* almost insolvable difficulties and things, very hard to be understood by men in this state, at least by common readers.

Sometimes the matter is so sublime, so unlike all mortal affairs, and so divinely superior to every thing here below, that perhaps it was not possible to describe it fully and plainly in human words : and the more enlightened the writer or speaker was, the deeper and more inexpressible might some of the truths be which he reveals. Our Saviour has made some such discoveries at the latter end of his prayer in the 17th of St. John's gospel. Such are the doctrines of the *union or oneness of Christ with God his father*, and the *oneness or union of the saints with God and Christ*. Some things are constrained to be expressed in a human way less suitable to their own dignity, and yet even then they are not perfectly easy to be understood, for earthly metaphors will not convey to our thoughts a full idea of things divine and heavenly. When Christ had been teaching Nicodemus the doctrine of regeneration, John iii. 12, he adds, *if I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?* The apostle Paul, the most enlightened of all mere men, saw and heard some things among his visions and revelations, that were *unutterable*, 2 Cor. xii. And *some things* which he has published for the use of the church, *according to the wisdom given to him, are hard to be understood*, as St. Peter himself assures us, 2 Peter iii. 16.

Again, I might take notice that in matters which are *prophetical*, both in the old testament and in the new, there are many dark expressions, many parables and hard figures of speech, which are made use of to express and convey some general and indistinct ideas of future events, which were not fit to be more fully revealed in that day, and which only the accomplishment was designed to explain in the future days or ages. *When these things are come to pass, then shall ye know that I have foretold them*, John xiii. 19, and xiv. 29, and xvi. 4.

The spirit of God, for wise ends, hath expressed some things in particular seasons, whether doctrinal or prophetical, in obscure phrases, capable of a double interpretation. Other things are very briefly hinted, and the holy writer doth but just glance at them in passing, and does not dwell upon them long enough to explain them, that being not his present chief design.

Some words are so ambiguous and of various meaning in the same chapter, that it is not easy to determine their precise sense in each verse ; and these words also transferred into our language may not have the same different meanings as the original, and perhaps too, may be determined to the wrong sense by the translators ; but the vulgar can read only their own language, and their judgments are

determined by the translator's opinion. The various meanings put on the words *nomos* the law, *ekklesia* the church, *cheirotoneo* to ordain, *episkopos* a bishop or overseer, &c. sufficiently prove this.

Besides, the sense of many a scripture depends not merely on the literal construction of the words, but on the knowledge of the context, and on the consideration of the scope and design of the writer, and perhaps the deeper design of the spirit of God that inspired him : it depends on the character of the person that writes, and on the character and condition of the persons to whom he writes, into what errors or evil practices they were fallen, at what times, and under what circumstances these things fell out : all which it is impossible every mechanick should know, and but few scholars are well acquainted with : these difficulties in scripture occasion different opinions among the readers ; and because each would impose his sense upon all the rest of christians, a thousand quarrelling *folios* have sprung from this source.

There is another difficulty and shade of darkness which falls upon many texts of scripture, and particularly in the new testament, from the extraordinary actions and modes of action in the primitive and inspired times. It is certain that some things recorded in the acts of the apostles, and occasionally

spoken of in the epistles, refer only to the extraordinary and inspired transactions of those miraculous times, and cannot be imitated by us : such are the communication of gifts by the imposition of hands, the healing the sick by anointing with oil, the multitude of useful speakers in one assembly, the talking various languages in publick worship if an interpreter were present, &c. It is as certain also, that some things are recorded in some of those scriptures, as patterns and directions for our imitation in all ages. Such are the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, the choice of deacons, the ordination of overseers or bishops, the practice of occasional communion, &c. But there are some *circumstances* relating to these actions, concerning which it is hard to determine how far they belong to the extraordinary affairs of that day, and how far they are rules for our conduct in ordinary cases.

Now from all these differences have arisen many laborious and angry volumes of noise and wrangle about the mint, the annise, and the cummin, about the dress and the fringes of religion, which have vexed the learned world, and disquieted and divided the church of Christ.

Notwithstanding all these difficulties in scripture, and the divided sentiments of men about them ; yet there is no room for the Pa-

pish doctrine of the insufficiency of the holy scriptures ; no need of any living judge of controversies, or a seat of infallibility on earth ; for the grand doctrines and duties which are necessary to salvation, such as repentance toward God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as a prophet, a high-priest, and a king, the necessity of universal holiness, pardon of sin through the blood of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal rewards and punishments in the world to come ; all these, I say, are written down in scripture, in as plain and express a manner as the nature and importance of them required ; and about these things persons of a sober, humble, and honest mind cannot well mistake, if they are diligent in their inquiry, and *seek wisdom of that God who gives liberally, and upbraids us not with our own folly.*

Not only are all matters necessary to salvation written plain enough for every reader, but we have also, as I hinted before, the promise of the assistance of the holy spirit to teach us to understand all such revelations, that sincere and diligent men may not be suffered to fall into such a mistake as to fail of acceptance with God. Nay, further, we have good encouragement to hope, that even in some things on which salvation doth not necessarily depend, but are only designed to promote the farther sanctification and comfort, peace

and hope of the church, the spirit of God will often assist the upright and humble seeker, yet still there will remain difficulties enough to exercise inquisitive souls, for I find no certain promise, that God will always satisfy every sincere inquirer in the full meaning of all difficult texts.

“ I glorify thee, O my God, that thou hast not confined the knowledge of thyself to the wise and the learned world, but hast written down the way of salvation so plain, that a child may read and attain it. Let the scribes and doctors and criticks of the age wrangle about the pins of the tabernacle, and the seats in the synagogue, let them contend, even to blood, about the *ofs*, the *ands*, and the *moreovers* of the bible, my soul shall dwell in peace, and rest on these pillars of safety, even the great and evident doctrines of the christian faith. *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast revealed thyself and thy Son unto babes*, and hast not made it a matter of wit and criticism to be a christian. *The foolish and the base, and the weak things of this world are chosen to salvation*, and they understand, and believe, and practise all the necessary articles, while they may differ from each other, in some lesser forms of worship and discipline, and are not able to maintain an argument on either side.”

What is here asserted concerning the sub-

stance of some of the *less necessary* articles of our religion (viz.) that they are somewhat obscurely expressed in scripture ; the same may be applied also to the *circumstantial* topicks, to the appendices, and the logical relations even of the greatest and most necessary points of christianity, as I hinted before. Though the practice of repentance, and the promises of pardon ; though justification by faith, and the death of Christ as a ransom for sinners, are so often and so plainly affirmed ; yet it is not affirmed so often, nor so plain in scripture, what logical relation faith bears to our justification ; whether it is a *condition*, as some make it, or a *receiving instrument*, as others suppose : nor is it so indisputably and so evidently written in the word of God, whether Christ died as a conditional atonement for all sin, and a purchaser of salvation in general for all that are willing to accept it, or whether as a strict representative only of the elect, and to procure neither absolute nor conditional pardon for any sins but theirs.

It is evident beyond all doubt, that where the gospel comes, *he that believes shall be saved* : but whether faith saves us as it is a mere dependance on divine grace, or on the priesthood of Christ, or whether it saves us rather as a hearty belief of the gospel and the grace of it, even such a belief as comes to be the

spring of our repentance and our holiness, this is not so exceeding evident as to leave no room for controversy.

It is abundantly revealed in holy scripture, that without repentance of our sins we can never be saved, nor shall any of our iniquities be forgiven without a sincere conversion to God ; but to declare with utmost exactness and full assurance what *logical relation* our repentance bears to our pardon, scripture hath not taught us quite so fully, nor so clearly described it.

It is sufficiently plain to every reader of the bible, that holiness of heart and life is of absolute necessity to our entrance into heaven, for *without holiness no man can see God* : but how far, and in what precise sense this holiness and obedience to the commands of God can give a *right to enter into the gates of the city*, is something harder to determine ; or what is that sort of right or title which our own sincere obedience gives us to the immediate possession of blessedness, though we are fully assured from several places in the word of God, it is very different from the right which we obtain by the obedience and sufferings of Christ.

In some places the sacred writer seems to mention one doctrine, while he is pursuing some one subject with warmth and zeal ; in other places of scripture the contrary seems

to be signified or hinted ; now both these in the literal sense, and without limitation, cannot be true : and which of these two texts must be reduced to the other, by certain distinctions and limitations in order to a reconciliation, is not so easy always to determine : for in some instances it may happen, that the proposition which is but implied in one text, is nearer the truth than another proposition which seems to be expressed in another place ; which can only be decided by a due survey of the context, and the different designs of the writer, and a comparison of other scriptures.

Therefore if we will dispute about these solemn subjects, let our warmest zeal and our sharpest weapons be engaged against those adversaries of the gospel, who attempt to ruin the foundations of it ; let us contend most earnestly for the defence of what God most obviously and incontestibly reveals ; but our coolest debates, our candour and charity, rather than fierceness, should be employed about the points of more dubious discovery : at best we should maintain great moderation so long, till we find the lesser errors spreading like a secret gangrene, and drawing along with them dismal consequences, till they are observed to infect the more substantial parts of godliness, and endanger the vitals and very essence of christianity.

If our reverend fathers and brethren have

shewn a fiery zeal about these lesser errors, I would persuade myself their chief motive was a suspicion of danger and ruin to the gospel itself, in the liberty, in the purity, and in the glory of it, if they should have connived at these lesser mistakes, or treated them with a cold indifference : and it is possible that sometimes they might have reason for their suspicion and their zeal, though it may be confessed they were but men, and their fervour might sometimes exceed due bounds.

But, in general, as to these meaner points, *moderation* is our duty : *whereto we have attained, let us walk by the same rule, and if any be otherwise minded, God in his most proper season will reveal it also to them*, Phil. iii. 15, 16. It is as if the blessed apostle had said, that those who trust only in Christ and his righteousness, as the ground of their acceptance before God, shall be joyfully received to join their right hand of fellowship with mine ; and if they do but pursue holiness sincerely from the plainer motives of christianity, though they are not well acquainted with those most noble principles of it (*viz.*) *communion with a suffering, dying, and rising Saviour as a representative, pledge, and pattern of spiritual dying to sin, and resurrection into holiness*, which are contained in v. 10, yet I will not disturb them about it, but hope God will discover it to them in his time.

Yet further, as the great *doctrines* of christianity and the necessary *duties* of it, are very much distinguished from the less necessary points, and the circumstantials of those duties, by their greater evidence and clearness of revelation ; so the more substantial parts of the *worship appointed* in the gospel, may be distinguished from the less important modes and circumstances. Solemn prayer unto God, preaching of the word, administration of the ordinances, baptism and the Lord's supper, and a due attendance thereon, are plainly and certainly required of us that assume the name of christians in our sacred assemblies. But whether we may borrow assistance from composed forms in preaching, praying, and other administrations ; or whether we must renounce all use of forms, books and notes to aid our invention, memory, and expression in prayers and sermons, are mere accidental matters, and not written in scripture with so express a pen. So whether the person baptised must be sprinkled or immersed, and whether the communicants at the Lord's table must sit, or lean, stand, or kneel, are less essential considerations, and have been the subjects of dubious inquiry.

Again, in the constitution, order, and government of a church, the same distinctions may be made also. That persons professing

the name of Christ should agree to walk and worship together at stated seasons in the fellowship of the gospel, seems to be a demand of the law of nature, and sufficiently confirmed by many directions or examples in positive expressions of scripture too ; that every such congregation of faithful people, or voluntary society of christians, is a church of Christ ; that they ought to seclude or put away from their number, the grossly ignorant, the scandalous and the profane, and to *withdraw from those that walk disorderly* ; that there should be persons appointed to minister to them in holy things, and that the society should honour and maintain them ; all these seem to be plain and undoubted duty.

But whether this society may receive and exclude members without or against the consent of their pastor ; whether there must be any elders in a church distinct from and inferior to the pastor or bishop ; whether the minister needs the imposition of the hands of several presbyters, or the superior episcopal consecration ; or whether he be sufficiently ordained by the choice of the society, his solemn acceptance, and his own and their devoting him to God in that office by fasting and prayer ; these things are not quite so evident in the writings of the new testament. And while we are required to have no fellowship with the openly wicked, though they are pretended professors of re-

ligion, yet we are commanded to *receive the weak in the faith*, and to hold communion with them in common christianity, though we may all differ in *doubtful disputations*.

SECT. II.

An Insurrection of contending Christians.

I am easily aware that the men of heat and party, will lift up their hands in wonder, when they read this catalogue and distinction of the affairs of christianity. I see them already kindling into rage against me ; they encompass my tent and proclaim war. And upon a review of their numbers, their insurrection and their zeal, I cannot find an advocate wanting for any one sect or party among the common professors of the religion of Christ in England. I see there *Merges* and his neighbour *Asperigo* ; I find *Sedentius* and *Genicola* both there ; *Piscopion*, *Classicus*, and *Antipas* are come thither also. Each of them a prince of their tribe, and either a head or a very forward member of the family of their fathers. Just so the children of Israel began to denounce war against their brethren Gad and Reuben, when they built an altar of witness to maintain their communion with the rest of their tribes, while they were *dissenters* only in

point of habitation, and dwelt beyond Jordan : these party-men are full of faith and certainty in every opinion ; they embrace none as brethren in Christ who do not wear their garb and livery, and talk not exactly in their language and phrases, nor will they hold communion with those that dissent from them in the least punctilios of the form or worship of christians. “ If men depart from the truth, (say they) they are in the way of error ; and it is all one whether they depart little or much, since they have forsaken the truth, we ought to forsake them.”

These warm zealots are not used to admit of any doubt in the smallest circumstantial of religion, and because they have learnt of their teachers to affirm all their tenets with equal confidence, they believe that the scripture reveals them all with equal evidence. A metaphor smiling upon their practice, is an express command. They can read their indispensable duty in a single and dubious example. A remote conclusion of their own drawing, at the end of a long chain of consequences, gives them resistless conviction, and appears in their eye as bright, though distant, as the morning-star. A circumstance or two of matter of fact determines their judgment unchangeably, for or against an opinion, which at most is but feebly favoured by those very circumstances ; a little criticism, on a

single Greek word in some single text of scripture, becomes a firm foundation for their faith : they force some text or other to prove every thing which they say, and when they have imposed their sense on the words of the holy writers, they are sure the evangelists and the apostles are of their mind. Each of them have picked up some scraps of the arguments of their party, and they fancy themselves well equipped and furnished for the defence of the truth.

Merges, a very honest man in the main, is newly come out of the water, and glows all over with zeal and assurance, that there can be no baptism without plunging : he makes a mere jest of *baby-sprinkling*, and declares that if we are not covered with water, we are not *buried with Christ* : No honest man, says he, could ever doubt that John's disciples were immersed at Enon, for the scriptures say, *there was much water there*, John iii. 23.

Asperigo, a bold talker, is as confident that sprinkling, or pouring water on the head, is a true method of baptism, and is ready to say severe things against the practice of immersion, as if it were not only needless, but, as they are ready to call it, foolish and sinful.

It is plain, saith he, in the word of God, that the apostles " were baptised with the spirit, which can never mean that they were dipped or plunged into the spirit, but only that

the spirit was poured out upon them :” and when the *Israelites were baptised into Moses*, it is plain they were only sprinkled *with the cloud and the sea*, Matt. iii. 11. compared with Acts ii. 3, 17. and 1 Cor. x. 2. and therefore, says he, I wonder that any man should be so weak as to give himself the trouble of dipping when he has such texts as these to prove sprinkling.

Sedentius, a weak and warm dissenter, is just come from St. Paul’s cathedral : being urged by great curiosity, with much ado he obtained leave of his conscience to go thither and see men receive the Lord’s supper kneeling : as he returns, he is almost ready to pronounce damnation against the organs and singing-men, for they are all, saith he, the limbs of Antichrist : he whispers damnation against these idolaters that bow before a piece of bread ; for they look as though they worshipped the host, and belonged to Rome. He is very positive that sitting is a posture of absolute necessity in that ordinance, for Jesus and his disciples *did sit and eat*, Mark xiv. 8. 1 Cor. xi. 20, and since it is called the *supper of the Lord*, we must sit down while we partake of it, for every child knows that men are never wont to kneel at supper.

On the other hand, *Genicola* hates the Presbyterians for their scandalous irreverence at the sacrament : “ What,” saith he, “ dare any

man use so clownish and so rude a gesture as sitting, when he receives the seal of the pardon of his sins, and the emblems of the body and blood of Christ ?” and he forbids all such worshippers from his communion with this sentence, “ *Procul, O procul este, profani ;*” i. e. “ hence, ye profane creatures,” though he can hardly pretend to bring one text of scripture for his own practice. He is sure also that the surplice is a sign or token of purity, and, as our reformers teach, ought to be worn at prayer, for we must lift up hands of purity and innocence when we come before God ; and he finds the long white garment in these words, *let all things be done decently and in order*, 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

To me, saith *Piscopion*, it is as clear as the light, that no man can be a minister of Christ unless the hands of a superior man, even a *diocesan* bishop, have been upon his head ; and all the preachings and ministrings of such a presumptuous wretch, who was not thus ordained, are but vain babblings, empty trifles, and impudent usurpations in the name of the Lord : for thus saith the common prayer book, which was made by saints and martyrs, “ it is evident unto all men, diligently reading holy scripture and ancient authors, that from the apostles’ time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ’s church ; bishops, priests, and deacons.” Thus he

proceeds triumphant where the civil government is on his side, and will yield to no man in argument or dispute.

Classicus arises in warm opposition to prelacy, and asserts it an indisputable truth, that no minister of Christ is superior to another : “ I read, saith he, in my bible, no distinction between bishops and presbyters ; they are the same officers in scripture : and the power of synods is so plainly instituted at the council of Jerusalem, Acts xv. that I am amazed this should be esteemed a matter of doubt or difficulty ; and I am well assured of this, because Timothy had the hands of the presbytery laid upon him, 1 Tim. iv. 14. There is no man above or below a presbyter has any thing to do in ordaining ministers since the apostles are dead.”

Antipas grows impatient at these bold assertions, and asserts with as much boldness, that the power of ordaining all sorts of officers in the church belongs properly to the brethren of a single congregation, and none besides have any authority to meddle with it, since the race of inspired men are dead and gone : the brethren have all the power in their hands, and it is the church or congregation alone that has any manner of right to choose and approve and establish its own pastors, elders, overseers and deacons : for is it not said, Acts vi. 3. *look you out among you seven men,*

&c. And if this be done at the choice of deacons, why not of elders too ? The learned say, that the word in Greek, which is used for ordaining of elders, signifies the choice or lifting up the hands of the brethren to vote for them. Whatsoever particulars are disputed in church government, the power of the people must be ever acknowledged and received as a fundamental and immoveable truth.

Among all these combatants there is not one but is so positive in his own sentiments, that one would think they had received all their opinions by inspiration, or that Christ and his apostles had been precisely of their party, and had written their opinions down in express letters and syllables. And not only are they so assured of the truth of their tenets, but the vast importance of them too : and each of them grows angry that his own particular opinion should be reckoned among the less evident or the less important points of religion : their fury boils high, and their mistaken zeal and warm ferment of their passion swell every punctilio to a mountain, and make every particle of their opinions fundamental : they do not observe how their swift career and violence carries each of them beside or beyond their text, and thus they are sometimes hurried on beside the goal of truth, and I am persuaded their assurance al-

ways runs too fast for their evidence, and reaches far beyond it.

They commend and practice vehemence as a virtue, and so far forget their bible as to believe all moderation to be a mere spirit of indifference, and unworthy of a good christian. They all maintain opposite notions, yet, by their temper and conduct, they all seem to approve each other's zeal for his own party, and with one consent they vote me a mere latitudinarian, a lukewarm professor, a citizen of Laodicea, who has not a spark of zeal for the gospel of Christ, the worship or the discipline of his church.

My dear zealous friends, be calm a little, and let me speak before I am condemned. I do not deny many of these things which I call *less important* to be some way discovered in the new testament, though not in so express and plain a language as you suppose. The chief concerns of the christian church are so far prescribed by positive rules, by examples or just inferences, that a serious reader, who is attentive and unbiassed, and who will exercise his reasoning powers, may find sufficient notices of all necessary truth and duty : according to my measure of light I humbly hope I have found it, and thereby regulate my practice.

But still it must be granted, that things less necessary are not so plainly described as the

greater and more substantial parties of religion, nor graven in characters so large and obvious that every one must needs discern them. *Christ Jesus hath been as faithful in his house as Moses was*, and has delineated the form, pattern and order of it, so far as infinite wisdom thought necessary to carry on the grand designs of grace and the gospel : but some of the lesser pins in this spiritual tabernacle are not so graphically decyphered, as that every child may tell whether they must be round or square. There is nothing of so much weight depends upon them, and therefore there was no need for them to be so expressly described under the new testament, wherein *bodily exercise profits little*, but worship and religion consist more in what is spiritual and invisible.*

Upon the whole then, since there are different degrees of evidence and clearness, wherewith some of the doctrines of faith, and the rules of worship and order in the new testament are expressed, there ought also to be found in us different degrees of assent or assurance, wherewith we should receive these doctrines, or these rules of duty : for it is a certain and eternal rule of logick or reason, that “ our as-

* See the essay on the reasons why the worship of christian churches is not so particularly prescribed as the Jewish, which you may find in the treatise about the holiness of times, places and persons.

sent to any proposition ought to be firm or feeble, just in proportion to the different degrees of evidence, whether they be brighter or more obscure.”

Here then is a plain and pretty general rule given us, whereby we may judge whether any particular opinion or practice be more or less important, and consequently whether our zeal for it should be warmer or cooler, viz. Is the evidence of this practice, or this truth in scripture more bright or cloudy? according to the light of evidence, such generally should our zeal be. Violence and fierce contention among christians, especially about matters of lesser moment, or of doubtful dispute, are infinitely scandalous to the christian name; and as they tend to ruin and destroy the churches of Christ, so in all ages they have greatly grieved the souls of those who love the interests of christianity, and wish well to Sion.

SECT. III.

Some Reasons why these Differences are permitted to arise among Christians.

If it would not offend my readers, I would here come to an ingenuous confession, that the different sentiments and dreadful quarrels of christians about some of the lesser things of religion, and the dark and dubious expres-

sions in scripture, wherein some parts of our religion are revealed, have sometimes been a sore temptation and sorrow to my heart, so that I have wished these doubtful disputables had been more clearly determined there. I have been plunged into the briars of this perplexity, when I have seen persons of devout soul, serious and humble, dissent so widely from each other, both in opinion and practice, and that in matters of some moment too, and even after long and honest inquiries into the meaning of God in his word.

Under these difficulties I have said in my heart, “ why did not the God of wisdom and of love express every article of belief and duty in words of plainest revelation and precept, that we might have all read the same sense, and been all of one mind ? why did he leave the least point of our religion dubious or obscure, when, with a long foresight, he surveyed all the quarrels and rage, the infinite scandal, the cruelty and the blood that in future ages would be the consequences of religious disputes ? ”

I have been pained at my soul, and felt an inward afflicting heaviness in such a meditation as this ; nor could I ever satisfy myself with that profane answer which some witty men have given, *viz.* “ that God, who might have made the rules of our duty plain and un-

disputed, chose to express them in words capable of several interpretations, that christians might be liable to be led into many different opinions, that hereby God might please himself with the variety of devotions that were paid him ; and that how different soever their sentiments and practices might be, yet that his commands are equally obeyed by all the various kinds of worship and service, which the consciences of men sincerely conceive themselves bound to offer." This notion inclines to that wild opinion, which supposes that any forms or methods of worship are all equally acceptable to God, and that there are more true religions than one : this favours so much of the deist and the libertine, and the disciples of the leviathan, that I could never admit it into my assent.

Yet it must be granted that his wisdom had some very valuable ends to attain in the way of providence, by permitting so many differences amongst christians ; and if we had been secretaries to the King of heaven when he formed his decrees, we might have known perhaps some of these awful arcana of his government ; but who has been his counsellor, or to whom has he given an account of these matters ? His paths are in the great deep, and his providences are trackless through the mighty waters ; *how unsearchable are all his ways, and his judgments past finding out !*

I dare not pretend to write a complete *rationale* on all his infinite and impenetrable designs ; yet my faith assures me that they have all the highest and divine reason in them. And I will take the freedom here to mention some of those considerations that have silenced my clamorous thoughts, pleased my inquiry, satisfied my conscience, and vanquished the dark temptation.

First, By these doubtful disputables among the accidental things of religion, God tries our sincerity, whether we will hold fast the substantials. The constancy and courage of a soul devoted to God is exercised and proved amidst the clamours and noisy contests of the men of party and angry zeal ; and when it persevereth in a course of christianity, notwithstanding all these stumbling blocks, it approves itself to God, its judge and rewarder. The differences of true christians in some parts of their faith and worship, have frightened and scandalized the hypocrite and the giddy professor ; their heads have been turned round with every wind of doctrine, because their hearts have not been established in the way of holiness ; they have cast off all the articles and practices of religion, because they find so many sects divided by their little particularities, and cannot precisely determine every circumstance of truth and duty.

There were divisions and parties, schisms and sects in the Corinthian church, *and they must be*, saith the apostle, *that they that are approved may be made manifest among you*, 1 Cor. xi. 19. Our Lord Jesus forewarns his disciples, *that offences will come*, and it is not possible that it should be otherwise ; *there shall be variance and strife in a man's own household : but blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me ; he that persevereth to the end the same shall be saved*, Luke xvii. 1. Matt. xi. 6. There are many things in the christian religion that *become stones of stumbling, and rocks of offence ; blessed are the upright that hold on their course and resolution for heaven, and whose feet stumble not upon these dark mountains*, because of their neglect to search out the truth, or their wilful obstinacy in dangerous errors.

Secondly, Not only our sincerity towards God, but our charity towards fellow-christians is hereby put to the trial, and charity is the very livery of the disciples of Christ. *Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye love one another*, John xiii. 35. The Lord hath commanded all his sheep to wear this mark of distinction from the world, how different soever their lesser opinions are among themselves. Where I behold the image of Christ my Lord stamped in legible characters upon my neighbour, can I love him

with warm affection, though he never frequents the same place of worship with me, though he wears a garment of another shape and colour, prays in a set form of words which I cannot perfectly approve, and subscribes a creed of different expressions, though the same in sense and meaning? can I receive this good man into my very soul, who eats nothing but herbs, and will not sit down at my table because flesh is eaten there? can I love him at my heart that loves Jesus the Lord, though he will not religiously observe the festival of his birth or ascension? Or do those little words *Christmas* and *Holy Thursday* set my heart at a distance from him, and make him forfeit all my charity? Such queries as these may be a touch-stone of our graces, and the test of true love to Christ and his saints.

There seems to be something of this design in our Lord Jesus Christ, when he ordered his servant Paul to write the fourteenth chapter to the Romans, where the apostle, though he gives a hint of his own opinion and liberty in the gospel, with regard to meats and days, yet he doth not impose the same observations and abstinences on other christians; and though he was inspired, yet he leaves these things still indifferent, and calls them *doubtful disputations*. Now as the *trial of our faith*, through manifold temptations, is

much more precious than that of gold that perishes, so the trial of our love passing through the smoaky fires of contention and dispute, and not mingling therewith, is discovered to be a pure divine flame, *and shall be found to praise, honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen we love*, 1 Pet. i. 7.

Thirdly, Perhaps our Lord might leave some lesser points of religion more obscurely expressed in his word, because he designed to continue a ministry in his church to the end of the world, or till he came again. While other christians have their hours and thoughts engrossed by the cares of this life, and want leisure and skill and means to acquaint themselves with all the difficult and more abstruse parts of religion, it is the business of the men that are honoured and employed in the sacred office to *give themselves to reading*, to search into the hidden things of God, and explain the more doubtful paragraphs of his word unto men.

I grant that the first and grand design of their studies and publick labours should be to preach the gospel of the grace of God and reconciliation by Jesus Christ, and to make the necessary articles of faith and practice plain to the meanest soul : but a minister is also required to converse not only with those scriptures which will make *him wise to final*

salvation, but with those also which may thoroughly furnish him to every good word and work, 2 Tim. iii. 17, that he may know how to speak a word in season to every weary soul, and to draw consciences out of perplexity which are vexed with scruples of less important things ; to instruct them in the mind and will of Christ about the methods of his worship, and the order of his church, to shew them the pattern and fashion of the house of God, and all the ordinances, and the forms and the laws thereof : and that is a part of his duty, at proper seasons, in some of his publick ministrations ; for he must conceal nothing of the counsel of God from them, that may be useful or profitable to men : the methods of his worship, and institutions of his gospel, should be treasured up in his heart ; and upon proper occasions, of private visit and conference, the lips of the priest should make it appear that they keep knowledge, that the law may be sought at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts, Mal. ii. 7.

Not that every man is bound to pay an implicit faith and blind obedience to the opinions and dictates of his bishop or presbyter. This is popish slavery wheresoever it is practised, and popish tyranny where it is commanded : but christians ought to give due attention to the advice and counsel of such as are set over them in the Lord, Heb. xiii. 17. 1 Cor. xvi.

15, 16. Such as are solemnly devoted to the ministry of the gospel, and have addicted themselves to the study and search of the scriptures, and are chosen by the people to be their teachers, and set apart for that office in the way they best approve ; and so far as their advice is conformable to the written word, they are to receive it as from some of the messengers of Christ.

We may humbly suppose a *fourth* design which God had in his eye, when the sacred penmen wrote so many verses of holy scripture, which God knew were so difficult to be interpreted ; and that is, that no christian might put the bible out of his own hands, or neglect to read and meditate and study the word of God ; and that together with their reading they might constantly implore the presence of the spirit, the enlightener and the comforter, to lead them into all truth. It is the duty of every man, so far as his capacity and opportunities of life will admit, to study the holy scriptures himself, and to see with his own eyes what he must believe, and what he must practise.

We should imitate the example of the noble *Bereans*, Acts xvii. 11, *who searched the scriptures* with diligence, and brought the sermons of Paul himself unto that sacred touch-stone, to see if the things which he spoke were true or not : and after all our

study, we shall find such difficulties that will convince us of the necessity of depending upon a higher teacher, even the holy spirit. Our blessed Saviour commands that we search the scriptures, and pray for the spirit too, John v. 39. Luke xi. 9, 13. And St. Paul prays unto God that he would give to the saints which were at *Ephesus, that spirit of wisdom and revelation to enlighten the eyes of their understanding*, Ephes.i.17. *This unction which true believers have from the Holy One, makes known to them all things necessary to salvation*, 1 John ii. 20. And though we have no ground to expect that he will unfold to us every lesser difficulty, while we live in this world ; yet we may humbly hope that in those things which regard the forms of his own worship, and the means of his own visible glory amongst men, he will by degrees let some divine rays of light into the mind of him that seeks after truth with great diligence, fervent prayer, and sincere designs. There are many instances to be given of plain christians that have been made the favourites of the enlightening spirit, and have arrived at uncommon knowledge in christianity by these methods.

A *fifth* blessed end, and which is certainly attained in the providence of God, by leaving so many disputables in religion, is, that our

souls are hereby drawn out to long for heaven, and pant after the state where there is no contention, no dispute. This prospect renders those happy regions more desirable whilst we are here, and more abundantly welcome hereafter.

It is impossible that any controversy should there arise to interrupt the worship of the church triumphant. It is eternally impossible to divide them into parties, or to disturb their repose. The doctrines of their profession are all written as with sun-beams, they are no longer the articles of faith, but the objects of sight : *we shall all be taught of God, we shall see face to face, and know as we are known.* So much of the holy spirit dwells in all the saints, as a perpetual spring of revelation and wisdom. The discipline of that church can occasion no disputes, for the Son of God, in our nature, is the pastor or bishop, he keeps the keys of heaven in his own hands, and the keys of hell and death. The soul that is once admitted into that fellowship shall abide like a *pillar in the temple of his God, and shall go no more out ;* but the hypocrite and the unclean shall never enter there. The worship that is paid there is with perfect uniformity of mind and affection amongst all the happy spirits ; a unanimous consent in self-abasement, divine honour and love ; and perhaps when our bodies shall be raised again

to make a visible church in heaven, worship may be performed with a glorious liberty, and with such a pleasing variety of form as glorified nature shall dictate, and our exalted reason approve ; but still with the exercise of the same perfect love and delight among the worshippers, and under the influence of the same spirit.

O the happiness of that upper region, where all the inhabitants are of one mind and one heart ! every doubt shall forever vanish, for we shall behold all things without a cloud. *In thy light, O Lord, we shall see light* and enjoy it. Every quarrel shall for ever cease, for we shall dwell in the land of harmony and love. Though our capacities, perhaps, may be of different sizes, yet we shall see all divine truths in the same light, and therefore our sentiments, at least in things of importance, shall differ no more ; we shall be united to each other in the same band of love, nor can our affections be separated any more for ever : that light and that love springs from the ever-blessed God ; God the creator communicating himself to all his holy and happy creation, and holding them fast to himself for ever, in and by that glorious person Christ Jesus, his son and image ; for *in him must all things be gathered together in one, and all things reconciled unto God in him, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven ;* then shall the

prophecy of Zechariah be fulfilled, *the Lord shall be King over all the earth, there shall be one Lord, and his name one*, in the fullest meaning of that expression ; nor shall the saints be distinguished by different parties or denominations, but their hearts and their names shall be all one ; according to those expressions of inconceivable glory, wherein our Lord describes the things which are truly unspeakable, all the saints *shall be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us*, John xvii. 21.

O with what pleasure have I often read, and methinks would be always reading, those words of a† great man, spoken on the funeral of his fellow-saint. “ When death shall have discumbered and set us free from all sorts of distempers, and brought us into the state of perfect and perfected spirits, how delectable will the society be, when all shall be full of divine life, light, love and joy, and all freely communicatè as they have received freely ! but above all that is conceivable in that other state, how delectable will their society be in worship, in the unanimous adoration of the ever blessed God, Father, Son, and Spirit ! O the inexpressible pleasure of this consociation in worship perpetually tendered with so absolute a plenitude of satisfaction in the dueness

† Mr. Howe’s funeral sermon for Dr. Bates.

of it, and the gustful apprehension of what those words import, *worthy art thou, O Lord*: each one relishing his own act with just self-approbation and high delight, heightened by their apprehended perfect unanimity, and that there is among them no dissenting vote. Whence it cannot be but to worship God in spirit and in truth, must be to enjoy him, and that he is not under any other notion, a satisfying object of our enjoyment, more than he is the object of our worship."

These are beams of celestial light for souls to drink in, and to live upon them while we are passing onward to these fair mansions through a wilderness of doubts and dark-nesses. These are words of harmony and love to entertain our ears, and make us deaf to the noise of a wrangling and disputing world. This is a heaven worth wishing for, while we are travelling to it through this tiresome earth, this unhappy stage of vexation and controversy : to this let us look with eyes of ardent expectation, and the devoutest wishes of souls : to this let us all aspire and hasten, who have groaned long under our own ignorance, and been burdened and grieved with the quarrels of the christian churches ; and whatsoever name or party we have chosen in our divided opinions, let us unite our hearts and voices in this loud request, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.*

ESSAY III.

AN APOLOGY FOR THE DIFFERENT JUDGMENTS AND
PRACTICES OF SINCERE CHRISTIANS THAT ARE
WEAK IN KNOWLEDGE.

In a Letter to a Friend.

GIVE me leave, my dear friend, to make a charitable apology for honest and upright souls, who maintain a strict course of piety and virtue, and yet appear to be unalterably determined for or against the communion of the church of England, upon very slight and feeble grounds : perhaps we shall learn compassion to the weaknesses of our fellow christians, if you and I together meditate on these following considerations.

Let us take a survey how many are the circumstances and various occurrences of human life, which do sometimes powerfully determine the opinions even of good and sober men, to one or the other side of this controversy, whether they shall fix their communion in the church of England, or amongst those who separate from it.

Here the first thing that naturally occurs is, the *education of different persons*, which has a

mighty influence to form their opinions, and to fix their practice ; and this, it must be confessed, is not in a man's own choice : the providence of the great and blessed God, the overruler of all things, determines this affair in a wise and holy manner, whatever the final event may be.

Jonathan goes to worship every Lord's day where his father goes, and as the child was never led to hear a sermon at a publick church, so the youth grows up in a groundless aversion to it, and the man stands at a wider distance, and can hardly be persuaded to venture in.

By use and custom from his very childhood, he understands the methods of the dissenters' worship, and the terms that are used in their sermons ; and if by any strange occasion he is led to the church of England, he finds no profit by hearing a clergyman preach, for he does not clearly take in the expressions and the meaning ; and it must be acknowledged, many of them have a different way of managing the word of God in their explications of it, different phrases and modes of expression, and too many of them preach doctrines different from their own articles and our common faith ; these things are shocking and offensive to the ear, rather than instructive or edifying to a new hearer.

Besides, *Jonathan* has imbibed long preju-

dices against the modes of worship and ceremonies of the Church, the forms, the gestures, the vestments, the responses, &c. and his soul is thereby mightily unfitted for edification by the prayers of the *church of England*, that are mingled and interwoven with them ; his palate is so much disgusted with this sort of entertainment before hand, that he either disrelishes or neglects whatever solid and wholesome food is set before him in the sermon that follows : I will not say, there is nothing of this folly owing to the influences of his education ; but it is hard, if not impossible, to amend or prevent all the faults of this kind in the education of children, by the best and wisest of parents.

These things joined together, put a strong bias upon the judgment of the man, and it is exceeding difficult to be removed ; and it is evident that his prayers, his practice in religion, his secret acts of devotion, are all regulated by the instructions he has received from his parents or some of his teachers : this makes his spirit grow uneasy under ceremonious forms, and he is quite untuned for devotion by the very sound of the organ. These things must needs have a mighty force on the minds of young sincere creatures beginning their course of religion and christianity, to establish them in the *nonconformist* way.

And I might also add, how rude and indecent a thing the plain and natural worship of

the dissenters appears to one, that has been bred up to ornament and ceremony in the several parts of worship in the established church.

By education and custom, a particular form of religion is so mingled with their nature, and wrought into their constitution, that you might as soon alter their palate, and change their taste of meats, as you can persuade their souls to dislike the ministry under which they have been brought up, and to forsake the mode of worship to which they have been trained. They are so positive they are in the right, that they never had any thought of calling these things to a new examination.

Secondly. The prejudice of the mind in favour of the *dissenters* grows yet stronger, if *Jonathan* has found his soul awakened to a fear of hell, and been effectually convinced of sin by the terrors of the law under the preaching of some *Boanerges*, some son of thunder in a meeting-house, and has been afterwards led gently into the knowledge of Jesus Christ the saviour, and has been taught to apply himself unto him for salvation by humble faith.

If the spirit of God has made the preaching of pardon and grace, by a dissenting minister, effectual to calm the surges of his troubled conscience, and to lead him in the way of

peace and holiness towards heaven, perhaps he feels his passions refined, his sinful appetites mortified, his temper changed from earthly and carnal, to spiritual and heavenly, how naturally will his whole soul be carried out to love this ministry ? and he would not willingly absent himself one day from the teachings of this *Barnabas*, this son of consolation ; he despises all the finer flourishes of eloquence, he can take no pleasure in the more polite, and perhaps more argumentative discourse of a doctor or a bishop in the *church of England* ; but where he has found light and food, and rest for his dark and distressed and hungry soul, thither will he go constantly to worship, and he calls that the sanctuary of the Lord, without once inquiring whether a parish church may not be the sanctuary of the Lord too ; nay perhaps his passion for the dissenters may rise so high as to deny the presence of God in the assemblies of the established church, or to allow very little of it there.

And by the same false method of reasoning may a churchman, whose soul has been brought to repentance and holiness by the ministry of the publick church, on which he has attended, almost hate the name of a non-conformist, and severely inveigh against them all as scismaticks and foolish teachers, when perhaps he never ventured into a meeting-

house, nor heard one sermon in any of their assemblies.

So far is it possible for piety, ignorance and prejudice to meet in the same mind : but our God, who knows the frame of human nature, looks down and pities and forgives. A hearty tendency towards God, and a pursuit of heaven is well-pleasing in his sight ; though perhaps the traveller, through ignorance, takes many a wrong step, and performs many a duty not exactly conformable to the directions of the word.

Now, though this argument be sufficient to determine him to be a *christian*, in opposition to other religions, because other religions have not this power to sanctify him, yet it ought not to be sufficient for ever to determine him to a particular party of christians, because it was not the particular opinions of that party, but the substantial and great doctrines of christianity or the gospel, which are professed and pretended to by both parties, that were so powerful to the turning of his heart towards God.

After all this discourse, I would not be understood as though I encouraged this laziness of men, and neglect of due and just reasoning ; no, for reason is the talent that God hath given us to be used in the affairs of religion, and he hath given us the rule of his own word for our determination, by which all

our worship ought to be regulated, and not by human inventions ; and men are highly guilty in their neglect hereof : but a gracious God will forgive, for he knows our frame and our frailty.

I believe God doth accept of such inward, sincere and experimental arguments as vulgar christians use to make or keep themselves *Churchmen* or *Dissenters*, *Calvinists* or *Arminians*. If they feel their souls raised to a more heavenly frame, and effectually engaged to the love of God, religion and justice, by attending occasionally on a ministry different from their education, sometimes they will be ready to separate even from a true church to which they belonged, for want of knowing the guilt and terrors and damnation that some men include in that hard word, *schism* ; and I persuade myself that a gracious God will accept of their upright designs and their honest motives, will pardon their separation, though it should prove unwarrantable, and bless their new communion to the advantage of their souls.

Thirdly. But suppose a man should forcibly divest himself of all former aversions and inclinations to the separate or the established churches, and enter into a sober search, and solemn debate with himself about the merits of the cause ; how few are there, whose necessary affairs of life allow them time

enough to go through the study of these laborious and entangled controversies? How small a part of mankind that are born to secular affairs, can, in their few hours of leisure, find out the depth of some of these difficulties? Who is sharp enough on the sudden to distinguish truth in the midst of the clouds of dust that are cast on it by the litigious wrangle of all parties?

The soul of many a tradesman is but just of a size with his shop and business, and hath not strength of parts or improvement to attain great and accurate knowledge in any thing besides; and those, whose ingenuity is greater, may easily waste all the spare hours of their life in treading the mazes of dispute about forms and ceremonies, and at last find themselves bewildered: Now I question whether such a man's head would lie easy upon a dying pillow, who had spent his time among briars and thorns, and neglected the fruit of the tree of life, or tasted but very little of it; he has been dwelling upon the moss and the ivy, and not gathered the product of those eminent branches of our holy religion, whence he might have extracted sweet cordials for a languishing and fainting hour.

Fourthly. Again, how very few are there amongst the giddy race of men that can so far annihilate their old opinions, and refrain so

long from embracing new ones, till they have made a thorough scrutiny into the arguments and pretensions on both sides? Who can dwell for months together in the uneasy state of dubitation? Who is there that has power enough over his own thoughts, as to hold his judgment in suspense for a considerable season, till the matter in question be fairly debated, and brought to an issue in the court of reason and scripture? How ready are we to incline our assent one way or another, as the various occurrences of life present shadows of argument for either opinion? A story of a wicked clergyman of the church will warp the inquiring soul of a plebeian towards a meeting-house; and an old song of Charles the martyr will determine another's judgment against the cruel dissenters, and make him a complete churchman. A flash of rhetorick, a show of reason, a warm sermon, and affections raised by a Tillotson at Westminster, or a Mead at Pinnors-Hall, will immediately turn the mind from its equilibrium; and you know when a balance is just turned, though it be but by a grain of weight, it falls effectually on that side, and sometimes almost irrecoverably too.

When we have thrown off all old prejudices, it is not easy to secure one's self from new ones. When we have so far gained the victory over education and custom as to retain

none of our ancient opinions, we are apt to fall insensibly under the power of the opposite doctrines, and become captives and slaves to new notions, merely because they are new. Novelty is as great a prejudice to fair reasoning as antiquity ; though perhaps not so universally prevailing. And there is many a giddy and headstrong youth that has hastily embraced maxims and practices contrary to those of his parents, to show how bravely he has broken all the fetters of education, and to make it appear that he thinks freely. When we push the boat off from the shore where it has long stuck in the mud, it is hard to prevent its being stranded on the adverse side. It is exceeding difficult to keep the mind in this medium of suspense till right reason determine it ; it is very troublesome to maintain the judgment in a poise till some weighty and solid argument sink one of the scales downward, and equitably decide the depending strife of opinions ; there is need of continual caution and wary motions of thought : a doubting spirit is in pain, and willing to be released. We are very desirous to believe somewhat, though upon slight grounds, that our souls may be at ease, and fall to practice.

Fifthly. But suppose men should have leisure, and books and other advantages, joined with resolution and patience enough to endure the pain of dubitation, and the long fa,

tigue of deep study and thoughtfulness ; yet how small is the number of those that are capable to distinguish betwixt real and apparent reason ; especially in subjects where the differences are of so nice and intricate a kind ? How few understandings are so acute, how few judgments so solid and just, so well formed and well-improved, as to determine controversies so long and so much darkened ? Who can see through all the false shows and pretensions of argument, and discern the true gold from that which only glisters ?

Turn your eyes inward, my friend, and behold a soul that has more knowledge and judgment than hundreds of the animals that are round about you, and that you are forced to converse with ; and yet after all your unbiassed searches and labours, and earnest prayers, how hard a thing you find it to resolve the point, whether you ought to remain in the communion of a dissenting church, or become a separatist from them, and unite yourself to the *church of England*. Now, if all your leisure, your advantages, and your application, cannot fix your assent and practice, infer then how vain a thing it is to expect that reason and argument should constantly determine and govern a blind, a rash, a ruined, and a wretched world.

I confess, in things of greater importance, and necessity to salvation, our directions lie so

plain, as to lead the most stupid souls that are honest and sincere, to the knowledge of truth and duty, unless it be here and there a man who violently breaks through the very language of scripture, and runs into great errors or irregularity of practice : but in things of less moment, how impossible is it that the generality of mortals should build every lesser opinion of theirs upon solid foundations and unshaken grounds ? or how can we expect they should be able to defend every smaller circumstance of their practice by just reasonings ?

If I were to recapitulate these things in short, I would draw up my charitable conclusion thus :—

Since our first apostacy from God has so perverted and spoiled our rational powers, and enslaved our minds to so many prejudices and passions ; since the impressions of education and custom are unavoidable and necessary, deep and strong ; since the affairs of the world that is under a divine curse, are so justly and unhappily ill constituted ; since capacity, leisure, application, humility, and prayer, are all found together but in very few persons ; and since the divine oracles, in matters less necessary, have so much obscurity in themselves, and so much thicker darkness cast upon them by contending parties, why

should we be so much amazed or so angry, to see so many different sentiments and practices among men of honest piety, and desirous of truth?

Farewell, thou dear companion of my studies, and if your light and knowledge should be so far improved by your further inquiries, as to lead you away from that communion, and those methods of worship wherein we have so often and so delightfully joined; yet I hope that upon the review of this letter, you will maintain a very charitable opinion of

Your unenlightened friend, &c.

ESSAY IV.

THE SOLEMN ADDRESS OF DR. WATTS TO THE GREAT AND EVER-BLESSED GOD, ON A REVIEW OF WHAT HE HAD WRITTEN IN THE TRINITARIAN CONTROVERSY, PREFIXED BY HIM TO SOME PIECES ON THAT SUBJECT, WHICH HIS EXECUTORS DID NOT JUDGE NECESSARY TO PUBLISH.

RIGHTEOUS art thou, O Lord; when I plead with thee ; yet I may talk with thee concerning thy judgments. Permit me, O my God and Father, to plead with thee concerning the revelations of thy nature and thy grace, which are made in thy gospel : And let me do it with all that humble reverence, and that holy awe of thy Majesty, which becomes a creature in the presence of his God.

Hast thou not, O Lord God Almighty, hast thou not transacted thy divine and important affairs among men by thy Son Jesus Christ, and by thy holy Spirit ? and hast thou not ordained that men should transact their highest and most momentous concerns with thee, by thy Son and by thy Spirit ? Hast thou not, by the mouth of thy Son Jesus, required all that profess his religion to be washed with water in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost ? Is it not my

duty then, to inquire, who or what are these sacred names and what they signify ? Must I not know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ thy Son, whom thou hast sent, that I may fulfil all my respective duties towards thyself and thy Son, in hope of eternal life ? Hath not thy Son himself appealed to thee in his last prayer, that eternal life depends upon this knowledge ? And since thou hast made so much use of thy holy Spirit in our religion, must I not have some knowledge of this thy Spirit also, that I may pay thee all these honours thou requirest from this divine revelation ?

Hast thou not ascribed divine names, and titles, and characters to thy Son and thy holy Spirit in thy word, as well as assumed them to thyself ? And hast thou not appointed to them such glorious offices as cannot be executed without something of divinity or true godhead in them ? And yet art not thou, and thou alone, the true God ? How shall a poor weak creature be able to adjust and reconcile these clashing ideas, and to understand this mystery ? Or must I believe and act blindfold, without understanding ?

Holy Father, thou knowest, how firmly I believe, with all my soul, whatsoever thou hast plainly written and revealed in thy word. I believe thee to be the only true God, the supreme of beings, self-sufficient for thine own existence, and for all thy infinite affairs

and transactions among creatures. I believe thy Son Jesus Christ to be all-sufficient for the glorious work of mediation between God and man, to which thou hast appointed him. I believe he is a man, in whom dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily. I believe he is one with God ; he is God manifested in the flesh ; and that the Man Jesus is so closely and inseparably united with the true and eternal godhead, as to become one person, even as the human soul and body make one man. I believe that this illustrious person is hereby possessed of divine dignity, sufficient to make full atonement for the sins of men by his sufferings and death, even though sin be accounted an infinite evil ; and that he hath all-sufficient power to raise himself from the dead, to ascend to heaven, and fulfil the blessed works for which thou hast exalted him, and to govern and judge the world in thine appointed time.

I believe also thy blessed Spirit hath almighty power and influence to do all thy will, to instruct men effectually in divine truths, to change the hearts of fallen mankind from sin to holiness, to carry on thy work of illumination, sanctification, and consolation on the souls of all thy children, and to bring them safe to the heavenly world. I yield myself up joyfully and thankfully to this method of thy salvation, as it is revealed in thy gospel. But I acknowledge my darkness still. I want

to have this wonderful doctrine of the all-sufficiency of thy Son and thy Spirit, for these divine works, made a little plainer. May not thy humble creature be permitted to know what share they can have in thy deity ? Is it a vain and sinful curiosity to desire to have this article set in such a light, as may not diminish the eternal glory of the unity of the true God, nor of the supremacy of Thee the Father of all ?

Hadst thou informed me, gracious Father, in any place of thy word, that this divine doctrine is not to be understood by men, and yet they were required to believe it, I would have subdued all my curiosity to faith, and submitted my wandering and doubtful imaginations, as far as it was possible, to the holy and wise determinations of thy word. But I cannot find thou hast any where forbid me to understand it, or to make these inquiries. My conscience is the best natural light thou hast put within me, and since thou hast given me the scriptures, my own conscience bids me search the scriptures to find out truth and eternal life. It bids me try all things, and hold fast that which is good. And thy own word, by the same expressions, encourages this holy practice. I have, therefore, been long searching into this divine doctrine, that I may pay thee due honour with understanding. Surely I ought to know the God whom I worship, whether he be one pure and simple being, or

whether thou art a threefold deity, consisting of the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit.

Dear and blessed God, hadst thou been pleased, in any one plain scripture, to have informed me which of the different opinions about the holy Trinity, among the contending parties of christians, had been true, thou knowest with how much zeal, satisfaction, and joy my unbiassed heart would have opened itself to receive and embrace the divine discovery. Hadst thou told me plainly, in any single text, that the Father, Son, and holy Spirit, are three real distinct Persons in thy divine nature, I had never suffered myself to be bewildered in so many doubts, nor embarrassed with so many strong fears of assenting to the mere inventions of men, instead of divine doctrine ; but I should have humbly and immediately accepted thy words, so far as it was possible for me to understand them as the only rule of my faith ? Or, hadst thou been pleased to express and include this proposition in the several scattered parts of thy book, from whence my reason and conscience might with ease find out, and with certainty infer this doctrine, I should have joyfully employed all my reasoning powers, with their utmost skill and activity, to have found out this inference, and ingrafted it into my soul.

Thou hast taught me, holy Father, by thy prophets, that the way of holiness in the times

of the gospel, or under the kingdom of the Messiah, shall be a high-way, a plain and easy path ; so that the wayfaring man, or the stranger, though a fool, shall not err therein. And thou hast called the poor and the ignorant, the mean and foolish things of this world, to the knowledge of thyself and thy Son, and taught them to receive and partake of the salvation which thou hast provided. But how can such weak creatures ever take in so strange, so difficult, and so abstruse a doctrine as this ; in the explication and defence whereof, multitudes of men, even men of learning and piety, have lost themselves in infinite subtilties of dispute; and endless mazes of darkness ? And can this strange and perplexing notion of three real persons going to make up one true God, be so necessary and so important a part of that christian doctrine, which, in the Old Testament and the New, is represented as so plain and so easy, even to the meanest understandings ?

O thou searcher of hearts who knowest all things, I appeal to thee, concerning the sincerity of my inquiries into these discoveries of thy word. Thou knowest me, thou hast seen me, and hast tried my heart towards thee : if there be any lurking hypocrisy in my heart, any secret bias towards any thing but truth, uncover it, O Father of lights, and banish it from my soul for ever. If thine eye discovers the least spark of criminal prejudice

in any corner of my soul, extinguish it utterly, that I may not be led astray from the truth, in matters of such importance, by the least glance of error or mistake.

Thou art witness, O my God, with what diligence, with what constancy and care, I have read and searched thy holy word, how early and late, by night and by day, I have been making these inquiries. How fervently have I been seeking thee on my bended knees, and directing my humble addresses to thee, to enlighten my darkness, and to shew me the meaning of thy word, that I may learn what I must believe, and what I must practise with regard to this doctrine, in order to please thee, and obtain eternal life !

Great God, who seest all things, thou hast beheld what busy temptations have been often fluttering about my heart to call it off from these laborious and difficult inquiries, and to give up thy word and thy gospel as an unintelligible book, and betake myself to the light of nature and reason : but thou hast been pleased by thy divine power to scatter these temptations, and fix my heart and my hope again upon that Saviour and that eternal life, which thou hast revealed in thy word, and proposed therein, to our knowledge and our acceptance. Blessed be the name of my God, that has not suffered me to abandon the

gospel of his Son Jesus ! and blessed be that holy Spirit that has kept me attentive to the truth delivered in thy gospel, and inclined me to wait longer in my search of these divine truths under the hope of thy gracious illumination.

I humbly call thee to witness, O my God, what a holy jealousy I ever wear about my heart, lest I should do the slightest dishonour to thy supreme Majesty, in any of my inquiries or determinations. Thou seest what a religious fear, and what a tender solicitude I maintain on my soul, lest I should think or speak any thing to diminish the grandeurs and honours of thy Son Jesus, my dear mediator, to whom I owe my everlasting hopes. Thou knowest how much afraid I am of speaking one word, which may be construed into a neglect of thy blessed Spirit, from whom I hope I am daily receiving happy influences of light and strength. Guard all the motions of my mind, O almighty God, against every thing that borders upon these dangers. Forbid my thoughts to indulge, and forbid my pen to write one word, that should sink those grand ideas which belong to thyself, or thy Son, or thy holy Spirit. Forbid it, O my God, that ever I should be so unhappy as to unglorify my Father, my Saviour, or my sanctifier, in any of my sentiments or expressions concerning them.

Blessed and faithful God, hast thou not promised that the meek thou wilt guide in judgment, the meek thou wilt teach thy way? Hast thou not told us by Isaiah thy prophet, that thou wilt bring the blind by a way which they knew not, and wilt lead them in paths which they have not known? Hast thou not informed us by thy prophet Hosea, that if we follow on to know the Lord, then we shall know him? Hath not thy Son, our Saviour, assured us, that our heavenly Father will give his holy Spirit to them who ask him? And is he not appointed to guide us into all truth? Have I not sought the gracious guidance of thy good Spirit continually? Am I not truly sensible of my own darkness and weakness, my dangerous prejudices on every side, and my utter insufficiency for my own conduct? Wilt thou leave such a poor creature bewildered among a thousand perplexities, which are raised by the various opinions and contrivances of men to explain thy divine truth.

Help me, heavenly Father, for I am quite tired and weary of these human explainings, so various and uncertain. When wilt thou explain it to me thyself, O my God, by the secret and certain dictates of thy Spirit, according to the intimations of thy word? nor let any pride of reason, nor any affectation of novelty, nor any criminal bias whatsoever, turn my heart aside from hearkening to these

divine dictates of thy word and thy Spirit. Suffer not any of my native corruptions, nor the vanity of my imagination to cast a mist over my eyes, while I am searching after the knowledge of thy mind and will, for my eternal salvation.

I entreat, O most merciful Father, that thou wilt not suffer the remnant of my short life to be wasted in such endless wanderings, in quest of thee and thy Son Jesus, as a great part of my past days have been ; but let my sincere endeavours to know thee, in all the ways whereby thou hast discovered thyself in thy word, be crowned with such success, that my soul being established in every needful truth by thy holy Spirit, I may spend my remaining life according to the rules of thy gospel, and may with all the holy and happy creation ascribe glory and honour, wisdom and power to thee, who sittest upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.

ESSAY V.

THE FOLLOWING REMARKS ARE TAKEN FROM THE MEMOIRS OF THE LIVES AND CHARACTERS OF DR. WATTS AND DR. DODDRIDGE.

MR. Samuel Palmer, a biographer of Dr. Watts, observes :

“ That of all the controversies which have been agitated in the christian church, there is scarcely any one that has been more constantly kept up, or conducted with greater warmth, or with a more intemperate and unchristian zeal than that of the *trinity*, or divinity of the Son and Spirit of God. It is unnecessary to relate the different opinions which have been held on these subjects, or to mention the names of their authors or principal abettors.”

“ It is well known to most readers how the trinitarian controversy was revived in the time of Dr. Watts, both among the clergy of the established church, and the dissenting ministers, and to what height matters were carried by the contending parties. Some, yet living, well remember, what it might be wished should for ever be forgotten, the animosities which prevailed at the meetings of the London ministers at Salter’s-Hall, on the business

of subscription to a test proposed for ascertaining *the orthodoxy* of those that belonged to that body, with respect to these points of doctrine.”

“ Many of those who had always been understood to believe them, refused to subscribe any test whatever, and of this number was Dr. *Watts*, who, though he was in the main in the orthodox faith, and had written in defence of it, did not choose to set his hand to any human formularies, which might be the occasion of invidious distinctions and unchristian separations among brethren.”

“ In this, as well as other disputable matters, the natural mildness of his temper, and his enlarged charity which was the consequence of his impartial investigation of so difficult a subject, led him to act the part of a moderator.”

“ In his book entitled *Orthodoxy and Charity united*, he had a view to this doctrine among others, and inserted an essay to shew the room there is for mutual forbearance and candour.”

“ His book entitled *Useful and important Questions concerning Jesus Christ the Son of God*, closes with an *Essay on the importance of any human schemes to explain the sacred doctrines of the Trinity*, shewing, ‘ I. That no such scheme of explication is necessary to salvation. II. That it may yet be of great use to the Christian Church. III. But all such

explications ought to be proposed with modesty to the world, and never imposed on the conscience.' ”

“ At the end of this essay are the following remarks, which are submitted to the reader's impartial reflections :—‘ These accidental inconveniences, [arising from religious controversies] are not a sufficient reason for our supine and perpetual contentment with confused sentiments and unintelligible speeches about the *modus* of sacred truth, if clearer ideas are any way attainable. There are just and strong motives that may excite us to search into the deep things of God, and to propose our improvements in knowledge to the world and the church, though there are no reasons sufficient to impel us to impose our improved notions on others, or to raise contentions and quarrels on the account of them. All our illustrations or clearer conceptions of this sublime doctrine, which God may have favoured us with, should be proposed with great modesty, with a humble sense of our fallible natures—and with a zealous care to maintain all those practical regards to the holy Trinity, which are of so much greater importance. And if it be unreasonable to dictate to our fellow christians on these mysterious points, how much more culpable is it to establish any special form of human explication of this sacred doctrine as a *test of Orthodoxy and Christianity* ! and to forbid any of the

blessings of special communion in the gospel, unless they testify their assent to such a particular hypothesis or scheme of explication, which the imposers confess to be human, and impose in their own prescribed form of words. The persons, who are guilty of this uncharitable practice, may consecrate their impositions and excommunications with holy names, and call them pure zeal for the Divinity of Christ ; but I suspect it will be found in the great day to deserve no better a character than a mistaken zeal for the honour of Christ, mingled perhaps with zeal for the divinity of their own notions, which they had incorporated with the plain and express declarations of the Godhead of Jesus Christ our Lord. He that makes a private and particular explication of any doctrine which is dark and doubtful in itself, and not clearly revealed in scripture, as necessary as the doctrine itself, which is plain and clearly revealed, puts the matter of *faith* and *opinion* on the same foot, and intrudes too far upon the authority of Christ in his church.' ”

The Doctor, in his *Miscellaneous Works*, in a piece entitled *souls in fetters*, exclaims thus :—“ What a wretched influence names, and sects, and parties, have upon the commonwealth of Christianity ! We hardly dare believe ourselves, when we have found out a truth, if our ancestors did not believe it too.

O where shall that city stand whose inhabitants shall traffick in intellectual treasures, and set forth all their new improvements and acquisitions in open day-light, without the danger of publick penalties or reproach? Where shall that happy race be born, who shall see truth with an unbiassed soul, and shall speak it freely to mankind, without the fear of parties, or odium of singularity? When shall that golden age arise, in which every rich genius shall produce his brightest sentiments to the honour of God, and to the general profit of men, and yet remain exempted from common slander? When shall the sacred mines of scripture be digged yet deeper than ever, and the hidden riches thereof be brought out of their long obscurity, to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour? O that these dark and stormy days of party and prejudice were rolled away, and men would once give leave to their fellow christians to spell out some ancient and unknown glories of the person of Christ which are contained in scripture, and to unfold some hidden wonders of the gospel!—But publick prejudice is a friend to darkness; nor could ignorance and error, without this shield, have defended their thrones so long, among creatures of reason, under the light of divine sun-beams.”

Dr. Doddridge appears to have been possessed of the same candid and charitable dis-

position. His biographer, Mr. Orton, informs us, " that when invited to take the pastoral charge of a large society of dissenters in the city of London, he thought himself unequal to so great a burden ; and besides, he was discouraged by the unhappy differences which at that time subsisted between the nonconformist ministers of the metropolis and its neighbourhood, about subscribing or not subscribing to articles of faith, in the words of human device, *as a test of orthodoxy*. In his answer to the gentleman who transmitted the invitation to him, he displayed the liberality of his own mind ; for, after mentioning some other objections to the proposal, he adds as follows : ' I might also have been required to subscribe, which *I am resolved never to do,*' &c."

When instructing his pupils in Theology, " he frequently and warmly urged them not to take their system of divinity from any man or body of men, but from the *Bible*. It was the *Bible* he always referred and appealed to, upon every point in question, upon which it could be supposed to give any light. The appearance of bigotry and uncharitableness were resolutely checked by him, and he endeavoured to cure those who discovered any symptoms of this kind, by shewing them what might be said in support of the principles they disliked, and by displaying the great learning

and excellent characters of many by whom they were espoused.”

“Though he stated and maintained his own opinions, which in a considerable degree were Calvinistical, he never assumed the character of a dogmatist. He represented the arguments and referred to the authorities on both sides. The students were left to judge for themselves ; and they did judge for themselves with his perfect concurrence and approbation ; though undoubtedly it was natural for him to be pleased when their sentiments coincided with his own. Where this was not the case, it made no alteration in his affection and kind treatment, as the writer of the present narrative can gratefully witness.”

“Once, I remember, some narrow-minded people of his congregation gave him no small trouble on account of a gentleman, in communion with the church, who was a professed Arian ; and who otherwise departed from the common standard of orthodoxy. This gentleman they either wished to have excluded from the ordinance of the Lord’s supper, or to have his attendance on it prevented ; but the Doctor declared, ‘ that he would sacrifice his place, and even his life, rather than fix any such mark of discouragement upon one, who, whatever his doctrinal sentiments were, appeared to be a real christian.’ ”

ESSAY VI.

MR. NATHANIEL HOOKER'S SERMON ON THE NATURE,
EXTENT, AND OBLIGATIONS OF CHARITY.

(Congregational.)

1 COR. xiii. 3. *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not CHARITY, it profiteth me nothing.*

THE scriptures are so plain and explicit, not only in the injunctions, but descriptions, which relate to charity, that a well-disposed, honest inquirer will find it to be such a principle of love and benevolence in the heart, as resembles that part of the divine character, wherein God is set forth as *good to all, and his tender mercies over all his works*. It is indeed a godlike principle in itself so rational, so adapted to the human and universal constitution of things—that it seems to have been deeply rooted in human nature in its original formation—and when we feel the want of it, we feel the effects of apparent violence done to our own faculties. The relations we bear to each other so strongly plead for the exercise of this celestial principle, that we fairly conclude that we never could have come from the hands of an all-wise and beneficent Creator destitute of it, unless we were sent

imperfect and utterly unqualified for the situation assigned us, and the part allotted us to act in life. This principle seems to be the universal spirit that animates and supports, nourishes and cherishes the whole extent of existence, as it operates in an infinite and unbounded manner in the divine mind in all the works of creation and providence, so it is essential to the cement and consolation of all created society, whether in heaven above, or earth beneath. I mean to be particular in discoursing upon the nature and foundation (both *rational* and *scriptural*) of this divine temper, this godlike principle in the soul, before I take any particular notice of the text, it being, in my opinion, a method better fitted to elucidate the words of the apostle in the text, than any other at present suggested to my mind. In that charity which is the grand demand of the gospel, we are required to *love the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our minds, and with all our strength*—and this same principle of love or benevolence, is to extend to our fellow-creatures, so as that we *love our neighbour as ourselves* ; which may be tried by a certain, concise, and infallible standard, exhibited by our Saviour, and by some called the “ golden rule of equity”—*Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them.* That mankind are not generally actuated by a

principle so full of utility to the world, so productive of internal tranquillity, and so conformable to the infinitely amiable spirit, is too plain. It is acknowledged that a fallen world are too much excited by the infernal passions of malice, envy and revenge, to transform the regions of peace into a field of blood ; but still it must be acknowledged that *charity*, in the beauty of it's nature, and the extensiveness of its utility, is too bright and obvious to escape the approving notice of human nature, debased as it is—so that universal charity, the life and essence of christianity, is but the very substance of untainted humanity, and the capital precept of natural religion—It is a spark struck from the Deity, and kindling the creature up into a resemblance in miniature of the Creator. Humanity thus exalted, thus actuated, is a picture of divinity.—Men must be very captious and unreasonable indeed, who blame the christian religion, on account of the sublimity or extent of its morals, when the temper of heaven, a godlike, refined principle is their life and breath. The apostle *Paul* has shewn himself master of equal argument and address in handling this point, in various parts of his writings, in many of which this grand characteristic of the christian religion is explained from the principles of natural reason, and confirmed by the general consent of mankind. He consid-

ers us as *members one of another*, and illustrates our obligations to mutual benevolence and compassion, by the care which the various members of the animal body have one over another, because if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. When he was convented before a learned *Pagan* audience at Athens, though scripture would avail but little for the conviction of his hearers, yet he found means to draw irrefragable arguments in favour of supreme love to the only deity, and universal charity to the intelligent creation, from the writings of their own poets, and the consent of the heathen world, Acts xvii. 28, *As certain also of your own poets have said, "for we also are his offspring."* The original and unchangeable relation of mankind to their creator, is of a filial nature—and in this view of it are we confirmed by our Saviour, since he teaches us to claim the endearing relation, when we invoke him as "our father which is in heaven." It seems from the use the apostle makes of this quotation, from a heathen poet, and the manner in which he adduces it, that the idea of a *parental* and *filial* relation between God and mankind, was so natural, and so universally dictated to the human mind, that the innumerable prejudices and superstitions that had over-run the *Pagan* world, had not been able *wholly* to efface it. He did not think it dis-

paraging to his dignified station in the christian church, to shew how consentaneous the chief pillars of evangelical truth were to the dictates of calm and unbiassed reason, and even the allowed maxims of their best writers. Our duty towards God not only plainly results from this relation, but towards our *fellow-men*. A temper composed of reverence and love must operate in our souls towards the universal parent, and the very consideration of our being his offspring, tends to inspire us with affectionate and humble piety towards the father of our spirits—and it tends likewise to set in a strong point of light our obligations to *love as brethren*, to be pitiful and courteous, to rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep.—Heart-felt sympathy, and mutual benevolence, are most assuredly due from those who are so nearly allied as children of one common father, partakers of one common nature, and united by the ties of blood and humanity. Various arguments, drawn from the infinite amiableness of the divine nature to enforce our obligations to place our supreme love upon him, might be here mentioned, but I omit them, and only subjoin this observation, that our duty as subjects to our rightful sovereign requires an ardent and unrestrained affection towards him. The preceptive part of God's word enjoins it, nor can we escape the guilt

and doom of disobedient rebels, unless we love the Lord our God, for God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. And from this godlike source, renewed in the soul, will proceed streams of benevolence and beneficence, that shall gladden the hearts of all within our reach. This will produce obedience, constant and uniform obedience to those injunctions of our blessed and exemplary high-priest. *A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you. All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.* And indeed, charity is frequently considered as the governing principle of our conduct towards mankind, and that for this reason, as it is beyond our power to bestow any degrees of happiness upon the Deity, our charity is to manifest itself towards our fellow-men, among whom there are a variety of proper objects for the purpose. Here a conformity to the divine temper may shine forth conspicuous in universal benevolence, in relieving the distressed, supplying the wants of the needy, comforting the disconsolate, forgiving the injurious and spiteful, and, in short, in doing good as we have opportunity, unto all men. This God accepts as if actually performed towards himself, and, as such, will reward it.—Therefore it is represented that the grand decision of every one's

fate at the last day, shall turn upon this single point, Mat. xxv. 40, *Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* Hence likewise our Saviour directs Peter to manifest his love to him by feeding his sheep and his lambs. *Faith, hope, charity,* (says the apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 13.) *the greatest of these three is charity.* Charity is that never-failing, lovely flower that grows from the root of faith; it unites to God, and makes us like God. Herein is displayed the divine image in the soul, whereas faith and hope have no place in the supreme mind, and would really be of no use to us, were they not as stairs by which we ascended to charity, the temper of heaven. *Charity never faileth.* Instead of leaving us when we leave this world, it shall go with us to the regions of love, there to be refined, enlarged and perfected; whereas faith and hope, as they are adapted only to an imperfect state, and imply a previous apostacy, shall totally fail at death. They have no place in a world of perfection; for there one shall be swallowed up in sight, and the other vanish before actual enjoyment. It is certainly then with propriety that this grace is spoken of as the essence, life, and sum-total of religion. That the grand article of inquiry at the day of retribution, shall respect the genuine fruits of this godlike temper

—that it is called the bond of perfectness—that hereby all men shall know that we are Christ's disciples, if we love one another—and that we know that we are passed from death to life, if we love the brethren. When good men are to be consigned over to a state of everlasting love and charity, the Judge vindicates the honour of his own character in shewing how they abound in those graces that best qualify them for an admission into such a state. And indeed the whole duty and life of christianity in this world, is nothing but love, varied in different scenes, circumstances and relations of life, in different acts, kinds and degrees, and towards different objects. Without this, there can be no piety towards God, and no justice towards his creatures : for however one may outwardly act that which is a real security of my just property, yet if selfishness and worldly prudence dictated his conduct, it can scarcely pass for justice. When we consider all these things, we have no occasion to wonder that the apostle has set forth the necessity and excellency of charity in so strong and emphatical a manner as he does in the text—*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.* Here it may be inquired, how is this possible ? Munificence and liberality towards our

fellow creatures, are the most natural and satisfactory evidences of internal charity—and surely, if a man voluntarily suffers death in the cause of religion, he gives the highest possible evidence of unshaken integrity, and conscious sincerity : how then can it be, that a man who devotes his whole substance to the support of the needy, and dies a martyr to the christian faith, can be destitute of charity, nothing but an outside shew, a tinkling cymbal, that is all sound, and no substance ? We frequently indeed, appropriate the name of charity to acts of bounty to the poor and indigent, without duly considering the spring and principle of such acts. When the general tenor of a man's behaviour is of this nature, we have indeed a most substantial proof that he is of a kind and compassionate disposition, and has a strong sense of humanity ; but we have no evidence merely from this, that he has that charity which is the bond of perfectness, a christian grace implanted in the soul by the holy spirit. And indeed, if a man lay down his life for his religion, greater love could not by one single act be shewn ; that is, it affords the strongest and clearest presumption in nature, of his fortitude and sincerity—but still this may possibly be done from some principle inconsistent with charity.

Some have taken the words to imply a supposition that the aposle did not intend that

such a case ever *did*, or ever *can* happen. To give us a greater sense of the sublime and exalted nature, as well as absolute necessity of charity, he makes a supposition to this purpose——“Suppose such a thing was possible, if I was to be so externally charitable as to bestow all my goods to feed the poor, was so religious as to give my body to be burned ; now, if I was destitute of this excellent grace in my heart, all this pomp of generosity, and heroick virtue that may serve to dazzle the eyes of the world, would never recommend me to the divine favour and acceptance.”

——Such fictitious cases or suppositions occur in scripture, and human writings frequently, and there is this advantage in them, that they hold forth an argument in its utmost force, and call in the imagination to assist the understanding in its conclusions. It is strict reasoning—for when a case is supposed aggravated and painted in the highest colours that it can gather from imagination—I say, if in this case it holds good, it must certainly be conclusive in lesser instances of a similar nature. But we may even go further than this construction or paraphrase of the words, and suppose that the apostle’s supposition is not merely fictitious, but *has* happened, and *may* again happen in *real life*, as to benefactions to the poor, and in a voluntary death—consider charity as a divine principle in the

heart, conforming the soul to God, and producing a uniform course of obedience to his laws, and we may certainly find men generous to profuseness in their benefactions to the indigent, without this grace ruling and governing in their hearts. And we may conceive of others under some certain circumstances, suffering a voluntary death for religion, and yet destitute of charity, or the very life and essence of that religion for which they suffer. A man that has no religion in his soul, and is in many instances extremely defective as to the duties of charity in its extensive sense, may be naturally of a kind, generous make and constitution, a certain bias and propensity in his nature, a native openness and generosity in his very composition, prompts him to support and provide for those that are in want, and he takes delight in it, not from any love to God, or delight in the moral perfections of his nature—the soft and generous emotions of his humane soul, render him a father to the indigent, and the blessing of those that are ready to perish, come upon him ; but *pride* may always reign predominant in him, and occasion may arise, wherein envy and revenge may have scope sufficient for action in a day of temptation. Mere *ostentation* and pride may make a man very profuse and liberal in his donations. His thirst after a character eminent for generosity,

may produce something excessive and prodigal in his communications, in which case it must be allowed on all hands, that he possesses not the temper of the gospel. Pride is one of the most active and vehement principles that actuates human nature, and one way in which it frequently operates, is by stirring up its votary to the specious, plausible appearance of generosity and goodness, when the affections and habits of universal benevolence and christian charity are entirely wanting.

Again, is it not possible, nay, is it not common for men under mistaken notions of religion, to hope that they shall atone for their sins, and expiate other violations of the divine law, by pompous sacrifices of a charitable nature? In Roman Catholick countries, men frequently part with *all*, or a great part of their estates that they may purchase heaven, and appease an angry Deity, whom they have offended by their past immoralities, by buying the good will of the church.—Something of these sentiments are sometimes found among Protestants, with respect to alms-giving, imagining that as charity will cover a multitude of sins, so, if they endow a hospital, or take care of a few distressed families, they balance accounts with conscience for all the oppression, fraud and injustice of their lives. These may all be persons of an uncharitable spirit, and who indulge themselves

in practices impious towards God, and injurious to man.

As to a man's laying down his life for religion, when he is destitute of charity, the essence of it—instances of this kind are probably rare ; but that such instance *may possibly* happen, must appear plain to any one that considers the *natural intrepidity* of some constitutions, the stubborn and impregnable principle of *honour* in others, and especially the amazing power of *enthusiasm* acting by itself, or in conjunction with the other two, viz. constitutional intrepidity, and a stubborn notion of honour. How far these things may move some of the human race, to condemn life, and court their fate, it is impossible for us to determine. If pride will spur men on to seek death in the field of battle, and if they dare purchase those laurels at the expense of their lives, why should it be thought impossible that the same principle should animate them to purchase the more noble crown of martyrdom at the same expense, especially if it be a prevailing opinion in their minds that such an heroick act will ensure them heaven, as the elevating expectation of being immediately received into paradise, if dying while fighting infidels, will inspire the most wicked Mahometan with invincible bravery.

Let us therefore improve what has been said in correcting all mistaken notions of oth-

er men's character. It is not a single act, or a few instances of exalted generosity that entitle him to the reputation of a good man. The habits and dispositions of the mind, and the general course of the life, are rather to be regarded. His sentiments and behaviour are like a river flowing uninterruptedly from an inexhaustible source. When we estimate actions in a moral sense, the distinguishing article of consideration consists in the principle from whence those actions flow : for, as the man thinketh, so is he.

We may deduce likewise, that a partial religion, a religion that is not perfectly consistent in its operations, both internally and externally, is really no religion at all. A scrupulous attachment to the circumstantial and ceremonials of religion, without that charity which is the very animating soul of christianity, must surely avail but little.—The zeal with which the bigotted sons of the Romish church inflict excruciating torture upon all that differ from them—and the scorn with which too many protestants load those that conform not to all their human devices, are full evidences of the possibility of a high profession, and great zeal for religion, without that charity which is the very soul of it. You may have great hopes, and pretend to great faith, you may have lively and affecting apprehensions of future and eternal scenes, and be

under the deepest concern in consequence thereof ; you may be frequent in the means of grace, and fervent in addresses to almighty God ; you may speak with the tongues of men and angels, may have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge ; though you bestow all your goods to feed the poor, and give your body to be burned—what are you, if void of charity ? sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal—an empty, noisy professor—a tinsel'd hypocrite. Some plume themselves upon the deep anxiety they have heretofore felt on soul accounts, and look back to past scenes of supposed contrition, for evidence of present sincerity. Others expect salvation from emotions of *imagined* humiliation, but of *real* pride, or a fancied dependence upon what Christ has done and suffered, without any love to the moral excellencies of his nature, or conformity to his character. Such a religion, I say, is no religion, that will finally avail, or answer the purpose designed by its professors. Knowledge, orthodoxy, and profession, superior gifts and superior attainments, exalted usefulness and unblemished character, all these are unavailable, unless a rooted principle of love in the heart, be the moving engine of the whole conduct—*For if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha—and if any man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar ; for he that loveth not*

his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

Let us all therefore, seek after fervent charity. Let a sense of the excellency and importance of that divine principle engage us to seek earnestly of God that he would shed abroad his love in our hearts by his holy spirit, and where this temper of heaven is already begun or implanted in any of our souls, let us be careful that we, by the genuine fruits thereof in our deportment, pay honour to the Father of our spirits, the author of the glorious change. Let a delight in him, and a desire after him, uniform obedience to his preceptive will, and a patient submission to his providential discipline, evince the sincerity of our charity.—And with respect to our fellow-men, let our love appear to be without dissimulation, by a just, righteous and faithful demeanour in all our commerce and conversation with those about us, seeking peace and pursuing it as we have opportunity, influence and advantage for that purpose, avoiding all the ways of covetousness, anger and revenge, entertaining emotions of pity for the afflicted, and partaking, by a grateful sympathy, in the good things of the prosperous.

But of all men in the world, none lie under more apparent obligations, capable of being enforced from considerations of a peculiar nature, to the distinguished exercise of this excellent grace, than the ministers of the gospel,

the ambassadors of the Prince of Peace. In as much as I am appointed to speak on this occasion, and the association have, by an express vote, declared their expectation at such times, of such matter as is adapted to a convention of the clergy—In as much likewise, as my subject may properly be improved to a conformity with the design of the said vote—and may I not add likewise, in as much as my declining health renders it very improbable that I shall ever stand in the place of a preacher at such a convention again. Taking these things into consideration, I beg liberty to conclude my discourse with a short, special address to my fathers and brethren in the ministry here present.

Reverend Sirs,

As I would not ramble from the subject in hand, and am therefore under necessity of confining myself to what relates to charity, the distinguishing capital grace in the christian temper, so there can nothing with more propriety be recommended to those of sacred character, than a distinguishing regard to, and practice of it. Evil surmises, animosity and jealousy exciting men to load one another with opprobrious terms, and undermining that mutual confidence which gives the sweetest relish to social life, are odious in men of any character, but peculiarly so in those that are set for examples to the flock. That distinctions have been made in our country among

the ministers of the gospel, merely on account of evil surmises, or groundless jealousies, or perhaps on account of some real speculative differences, and that these distinctions have been followed with effects very prejudicial to the peace and harmony of the church, is very certain. God forbid that we should any of us cease to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints ; and the fundamental articles of this faith are too explicitly, plainly and repeatedly revealed in the holy oracles for an honest inquirer to mistake. As to difference in speculative matters, or the conveniency of this or that mode of worship or discipline, it is not to be expected but that it must necessarily arise. A veneration for our ancestors, our different complexions and constitutions, with a variety of other supposeable circumstances, render it almost impossible that uniformity of sentiment in all things should take place : but pray let us, in such a case, act as did the guiltless Nathanael, who entertained so strong a prejudice against Nazareth, that when Peter told him he had found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, exclaimed can any good thing come out of Nazareth ? Peter says, " Come and see," examine the matter yourself—he accordingly does—his prejudices give way to his conviction, and he acknowledges the Messiah in these words, " Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art

the King of Israel." And yet while he laboured under this prejudice, he was a good man ; for when Jesus saw Nathanael coming unto him, he saith of him, " Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." As long as men may have good affections in their hearts, and yet entertain some wrong notions in their heads—charity, which hopeth all things, should influence us, if it be possible, as much as in us lieth, to live peaceably with all men. Don't let us at any time be rash and severe in judging any. Let us remember that we all are servants of one master, and must finally be called to give up our account to him of our conduct in his service. Let us therefore, endeavour to be faithful to strengthen one another's hands, and encourage one another's hearts. Little and unnecessary animosities and bickerings among those engaged in labours of so arduous and important a nature, and followed with consequences so very interesting to ourselves and others, let them arise from what source they will, are certainly pernicious. According to apostolick advice, I will not rebuke an elder, but intreat him as father, and the younger men as brethren. I therefore, my fathers and brethren, intreat you to seek the promotion of charity among your people—the benefit of it in the world—and the more illustrious exercise of it among yourselves. The excellency of the subject, and the dignified rank it

holds among the christian graces, will recommend it as a theme of frequent discourse in your publick administrations. It's advantage to the world will make you, were it only from political motives, industrious that it be understood and practised in the world ; and a regard to the honour of your sacred character, will influence you to be expemplary in the exercise of it, since you are as a city set upon a hill which cannot be hidden. Never can the words of the Psalmist be applied with more propriety than when they are applied to gospel ministers : *Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity : It is like the precious ointment upon the head, which ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that ran down to the skirts of his garments, as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion.*

O ! may we ever shew ourselves patterns in good works ; in doctrine, uncorruptness, gravity, sound speech that cannot be condemned, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God, doing nothing against the truth, but for the truth, nothing through vain glory, but to edification, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the eternal Father, and ever blessed Spirit, be blessing, honour and glory forever and ever, AMEN.

ESSAY VII.

A SHORT EXTRACT FROM THE WRITINGS OF MR. WILLIAM CHILLINGWORTH, ON THE RELIGION OF PROTESTANTS.

“CHILLINGWORTH, addressing himself to a Roman writer, speaks of *the religion of Protestants* in the following terms, worthy to be inscribed in letters of gold.”

“Know then, sir, that when I say the *religion of Protestants* is in prudence to be preferred before your's ; as, on the one side I do not understand by your religion the doctrine of *Bellarmino* or *Baronius*, or any other private man amongst you, nor the doctrine of the *Sarbonne*, or of the *Jesuits*, or of the *Dominicans*, or any other particular company among you, but that in which you all agree, or profess to agree, *The doctrine of the Council of Trent* : so accordingly on the other side, by *the religion of Protestants*, I do not understand the doctrine of *Luther*, or *Calvin*, or *Melancthon*, nor the *confession of Augsburgh*, or *Geneva*, nor the *Catechism of Heidelberg*, nor *the articles of the Church of England*—no, nor *the harmony of Protestant confessions*, but that wherein they all agree, and which they all subscribe with a greater harmony, as a perfect rule of faith and action, that is, *the Bible* ! The *Bible*, I say, the *Bible only*, is the religion of Protestants, whatever else they believe besides it, and the plain,

irrefragable, indubitable consequences of it, well may they hold it as a matter of opinion ; but as a matter of faith and religion, neither can they with coherence to their own grounds believe it themselves, nor require belief of it of others, without most high and most schismatical presumption, I, for my part, after a long, (and as I verily believe and hope) impartial search of the true way to eternal happiness, do profess plainly, that I can not find any rest for the sole of my foot, but upon this *Rock* only. I see plainly, and with my own eyes, that there are popes against popes, and councils against councils ; some fathers against other fathers, the same fathers against themselves ; a consent of fathers of one age against a consent of fathers of another age : traditive interpretations of scripture are pretended, but there are few or none to be found ; no tradition but that of scripture can derive itself from the fountain, but may be plainly proved either to have been brought in, in such an age after *Christ*, or that in such an age it was not in. In a word, there is no sufficient certainty but of scripture for any *considering* man to build upon. This, therefore, and this only, I have reason to believe. This I will profess ; according to this, I will live ; and for this, if there be occasion, I will not only willingly, but even gladly lose my life, though I should be sorry that *Christians* should take it from me. Pro-

pose me any thing out of the book, and require whether I believe or not, and seem it ever so incomprehensible to human reason, I will subscribe it with hand and heart, as knowing that no demonstration can be stronger than this, *God hath said so, therefore it is true.* In other things I will take no man's liberty of judging from him ; neither shall any man take mine from me. I will think no man the worse *man*, nor the worse *Christian* ; I will love no man the less for differing in opinion from me. And what measure I mete to others, I expect from them again. I am fully assured that God *does* not, and therefore men *ought* not, to require any more of any man than this—*To believe the scripture to be God's word ; to endeavour to find the true sense of it, and to live according to it."*

Chillingworth's works, folio edit. 1742.

"It may be proper to add that Chillingworth was a very learned and eminent divine of the Church of England, and lived in the reign of Charles the first. In the earlier part of his life he embraced the Romish religion ; but having found after the most impartial investigation, that it was false and inconclusive, he returned to the communion of the Church of England, and vindicated the protestant religion, in a work intituled, *The religion of Protestants a safe way to heaven.*"—Extracted from Mr. John Evans's sketch of the denominations of the Christian world.

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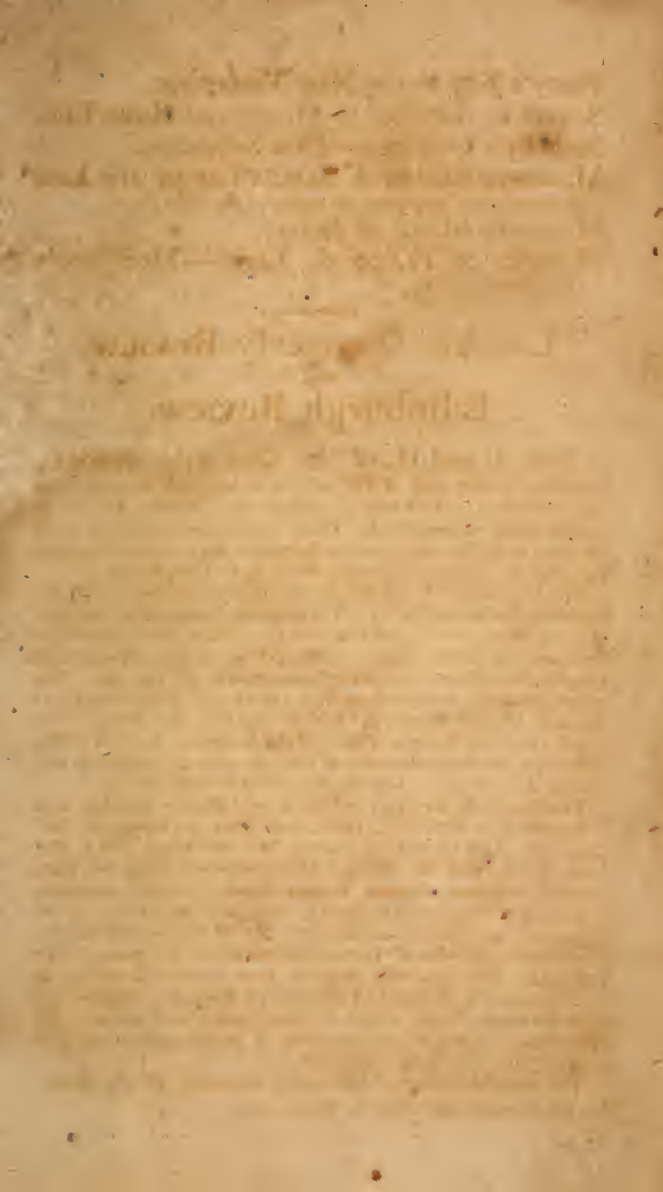
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The Quarterly Review, which is published in London, was commenced in February, 1809, under the patronage of Mr. Canning ; and he and his friends Mr. Hookham Frere, Mr. John Smith, and Mr. George Ellis, together with the Rev. Gerard Andrews, Messrs. Walter Scott, Southey, Stephen, and some others, have engaged to contribute materials, the arrangement of which is confined to Mr. William Gifford, the celebrated translator of Juvenal, as editor of the work. The writers for the Quarterly Review have already acquired as high characters as critics in matters of taste and science as their northern rivals, whilst for impartiality and fairness, for moderation in politics, for soundness of morals and sincerity in religion, they are thought superior.

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JAN 31 1939

